

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

By law, all doctors who manage a case of suspected food poisoning have a duty to report the matter to the local authority. This is because food poisoning is a 'notifiable' disease. Population Health will usually follow up cases of food poisoning for the following reasons;

- To see if your case of food poisoning is part of a wider community 'outbreak' of illness caused by contaminated food. The information you give us will help us our investigation.
- To find out if this food poisoning episode presents a particular risk to the wider community, eg, if a person works in the food industry, hospital or special school etc.
- To give you guidance on food safety measures which may help to reduce the likelihood of food poisoning in the future.
- To advise you on how the spread of the problem within the household can be avoided.

We liaise with the NSW Food Authority to prevent further any instances from occurring. Any information regarding yourself or your illness will be kept confidential.

Is your case part of a community outbreak?

Are you aware of anyone else who has been ill with the same type of symptoms, at around the same time, among those people who have eaten the same meals or food as the ill person?

**If so, please contact
OzFoodnet
Hunter New England
Population Health
Ph: 02 49246 477**



FOOD POISONING & GASTROENTERITIS



Food Poisoning & Gastroenteritis

It is estimated that 5.4 million Australians will get ill with food poisoning each year. If a family member, friend or even yourself gets 'gastro', read on, and find out how you stop the spread!

Precautions for avoiding household spread

- Contact with diarrhoea or vomit from a case of gastroenteritis (tummy upset) or food poisoning can spread disease.

Washing Hands

- Carers and household members should always **wash hands** before touching, preparing, serving or eating food and drink.
- Careful **hand washing** with soap and warm water, with thorough hand drying, is the key to preventing the spread of food poisoning germs.
- People ill with diarrhoea and/or vomiting and their carers, must take additional care and **thoroughly** wash their hands after using the toilet.

Washing Clothes

- **Always wash hands** after attending to the affected person, their laundry or other soiled items. Do not share towels.
- Wear plastic or rubber gloves while washing soiled linen. Wash hands afterwards.
- Wash soiled clothing and bed linen in a 'hot cycle'.
- If the amount of soiling makes this impractical, flush as much soiling as possible away in running water, preferably into the toilet bowl.
- Soaking in disinfectant is not necessary and may damage some fabrics.

Cleaning the House

- Clean 'touch points' such as toilet seats, flush handles, taps and door handles after each contact by the patient, or at least daily while the illness persists.
- Use detergent followed by a disinfectant, such as bleach based household cleaner when cleaning. Alternatively, alcohol-based wipes may be used on hard surfaces.

If you are ill with gastroenteritis, avoid preparing food! If you unable to do this, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water to stop the spread!

I've Got Gastro Should I Work?

The following groups of people are regarded as in 'special risk' groups as far as food poisoning and gastroenteritis is concerned:

- **People working in the food industry** whose work involves direct contact with foods.
- **Health care staff**, who have direct contact, or contact through serving food, drink or medicines, with frail or vulnerable groups of patients.
- **Children under 5 years** who attend nurseries, playgroups, preschools, day care centres or other similar groups.
- **Child care workers**, who look after children under 5 years
- **Older children and adults** who may find it difficult to have good standards of personal hygiene. This might include those with learning difficulties or special needs.

If the ill person, or one of their household, is in one of these special groups, it is most important to ask advice from Hunter New England Population Health **02 4924 6477** about special precautions.