

INFECTIOUS DISEASE INFORMATION SHEET



Salmonella Food Poisoning

Salmonella is a normal gut bacteria found in many animals, birds and reptiles without any signs of ill effect. When animals are slaughtered the bacteria from the gut and faeces may contaminate the meat.

Drinking water may be contaminated by animal faeces. Fruits and vegetables may be contaminated by manure or fertiliser. Foods that are not washed or thoroughly cooked may be a source of disease.

Cooked foods may become contaminated by cutting boards and knives used to prepare raw meats and vegetables. Contamination may also occur from dirty clothing and from people's hands. Always wear clean protective clothing and wash hands regularly. Cooked meats and poultry left at room temperature can rapidly grow Salmonella in only a few hours.

Campylobacter Food Poisoning

Campylobacter is a normal gut bacteria found mainly in birds, cattle and sheep. It is often found in raw chicken as a result of contamination during slaughtering. Campylobacter may be found in untreated water supplies, lakes, rivers, dams etc. and this may affect ducks, fresh water fish and shellfish.

It is often found in raw chicken as a result of contamination during slaughtering. Unpasteurised milk is also frequently contaminated from faecal matter during milking. Undercooked foods such as chicken are often a source of disease.

Cooked foods may become contaminated by cutting boards and knives used to prepare raw chicken meat. Contamination may also occur from dirty clothing and from people's hands. Always wear clean protective clothing and wash hands regularly. Cooked meats and poultry left at room temperature can rapidly grow Campylobacter.

Giardia Infection

Giardia is a small single celled parasite about 2-3 times the size of a salmonella bacteria. It is found throughout the world in the gut of animals and people and untreated water. Giardia does not live and grow outside the stomach but it does have a protective egg-like cyst which allows it to survive and be passed on to new animals and people. The cyst is passed in faeces and may contaminate untreated water supplies, lakes, rivers, dams etc. It may also be present in manure and contaminate unwashed fruits and vegetables.

The cyst is very resistant to chemicals, which kill bacteria such as chlorine, which is used to treat drinking water. It is easily killed, however, by boiling water for one or two minutes.

In Australia THE MOST COMMON source of Giardia infection is direct 'hand-to-mouth' transfer between young children or to parents of affected children.

How does food contamination occur in the home?

Fruits and vegetables that are not washed may be a source of contamination from manure and dirt on the outside of the fruit or vegetable. Cutting boards, benches, knives and other utensils used to prepare raw meats and vegetables will become contaminated with bacteria. Cooked food will become contaminated if placed on dirty cutting boards or benches or if dirty utensils are used to carve or stir the food.

Salmonella and Campylobacter grow in moist foods rich in proteins and carbohydrates such as meats, stews and dairy products. Both can grow rapidly if cooked foods are more than a few days old there is a risk that only a few contaminating bacteria may have grown to such high numbers that they can cause disease.

A few ideas that may help avoid food poisoning:-

- Wash all fruit and vegetables before use.
- Wash hands and wear clean protective clothes when preparing food.
- Clean cutting board/knife between use for raw food and cooked food.
- Ensure that frozen meat/chicken is totally thawed before cooking.
- Fully cook red meat and chicken - blood must not come out when cut.
- Cover and place leftover cooked foods in fridge as soon as possible.
- Use a separate hand towel and dish-drying towel. Change towels daily.
- Avoid using food, which has passed its 'use-by' or 'expiry' date.
- Do not eat food, which looks, smells, or tastes 'off'.
- Clean utensils, boards and benches with clean hot soapy water.
- Disinfect all utensils, boards and benches with a weak solution of bleach.
- Wash dishes as soon as possible to control bacteria and vermin.

What to do if you need help

If you have any questions about this form or need help with a health matter, call your Local Council Health Department. An Environmental Health Officer will be able to assist with most local health and hygiene problems. Your local Council is the City of Rockingham, phone number 9528 0315.