



State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

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What is foodborne illness?

Foodborne illnesses usually occur after consuming contaminated food, beverages or water. There are many types of foodborne illnesses. Most foodborne illnesses are intestinal infections caused by germs like bacteria, viruses or parasites. Other foodborne illnesses are poisonings caused by harmful toxins or chemicals.

You can get foodborne intestinal infections:

- By consuming contaminated food, beverages or water.
- Through contact with contaminated recreational or drinking water.
- Through contact with infected animals.
- Through contact with stool of another person who is infected.

What are the symptoms of foodborne illness?

The most common symptoms of foodborne illness are diarrhea and/or vomiting. Other symptoms might include cramping, nausea, fever, headache, tiredness and sometimes blood or pus in the stool. While many people with foodborne illness believe they got it from the last meal they ate, this is not always the case. Symptoms of foodborne illness can begin as early as 30 minutes after consuming contaminated food, beverages or water. More commonly, symptoms start one or more days after the exposure. The illness generally lasts a few days, but can be more severe in people who have medical problems or weakened immune systems.

How are foodborne illnesses treated?

People who are healthy typically recover from foodborne illness without medical treatment. Antibiotics are usually not recommended for most foodborne illnesses. Some people, including pregnant women, the elderly, very young children, and those with weakened immune systems may need medical attention and special treatment for foodborne illnesses. They should consult a health care provider regarding their illness.

What should I do if I think I have a foodborne illness?

- 1) Consult with your health care provider to see if you need a medical exam.
- 2) To report a suspected foodborne illness, call the New Mexico Department of Health at 505-827-0006 or the New Mexico Environment Department during the hours of Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00p.m. At 1-877-654-8720. You can also locate the nearest Environment

Department field office on the web at:

http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/Food_Program/index.html

- 3) To report a restaurant for possible health code violations, call the New Mexico Environment Department at 505-476-8600. You can also locate the nearest Environment Department field office on the web at: http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/fod/Food_Program/index.html

How can I avoid getting foodborne illness?

- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Keep raw meat separate from produce, cooked foods, and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash hands, knives, cutting boards and other surfaces that have been in contact with raw meat.
- Avoid eating unpasteurized dairy products.
- Wash hands after contact with animals.

If I have diarrhea, how can I keep other people from getting ill?

- Wash your hands frequently.
- Do not prepare food for others when you have diarrhea. If you work in a restaurant, do not handle food when you have diarrhea. You may need to be excused from work until your diarrhea resolves or until your doctor says you can go back to work.
- If your child goes to a babysitter or a daycare center, keep the child home until his/her diarrhea has stopped.