



Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness is caused by eating food that is contaminated by bacteria, viruses, or chemicals. Foods can be contaminated by food workers who do not practice good personal hygiene and sanitation. Improper storage and labeling can increase chances of chemical contamination of food. Proper cooking and processing of food destroys harmful bacteria. Keeping cold foods cold and hot foods hot can slow the growth of harmful bacteria. Foodborne illness can be avoided but use safe food handling practices.

Symptoms of foodborne illness

Foodborne illness has similar symptoms to the flu. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are most common. Other symptoms include headaches, muscle aches, chills and fever. Symptoms can start in a few minutes or take as long as six weeks after eating the contaminated food. Onset times depend on the type and amount of bacteria in the food. The severity and length of illness can also vary. Very young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk from any harmful bacteria. Some people may become ill after eating only a few harmful bacteria while others show no symptoms after eating thousands. It depends on the individual.



Bacteria in food

Bacteria are everywhere. They can be found on raw meat, poultry and seafood, as well as fresh produce such as green onions, lettuce, melons and sprouts. Bacteria can also get into foods through cross-contamination. Cross-contamination occurs when ready-to-eat or safely cooked foods contact contaminated products such as raw products, juices from raw products or unclean hands, surfaces, and food preparation equipment. Once in food product, bacteria can multiply rapidly if they have a food source, warmth, and moisture.

Potentially hazardous foods (PHF)

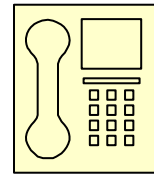
A potentially hazardous food requires time and temperature control for safety. Almost any food made from animal products, such as meat, fish, seafood, poultry, eggs, milk and dairy products, are considered PHF. Refried beans, cooked rice and



baked potatoes, and more recently, sprouts and melons, are also considered PHF. These types of foods contain protein and moisture that bacteria need to grow and multiply. When potentially hazardous foods are kept at improper temperatures, bacteria can multiply and cause food borne illness. Time and temperature control is required to keep a potentially hazardous food safe.

Reporting foodborne illness

If you suspect you or a customer has foodborne illness, respond quickly. All foodborne illness should, including those that occur at home, picnics, and community should be reported to the Hawaii State Department of Health. (Refer to Foodborne Illness Reporting Line below) Seek treatment as needed. If the person involved is in an “at-risk” group seek medical care immediately. If symptoms are severe (excessive nausea and vomiting, bloody diarrhea, high fever, numbness or difficulty breathing) or continue, call your doctor.



For more information:

- [Foodborne Illness Reporting Line](#) (pdf file)
- [Do It Right-Part 1: Foodborne Illness](#) (video)