

# BACILLUS FOOD POISONING

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Your Questions Answered

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EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## What is Bacillus food poisoning?

Bacillus food poisoning is caused by a group of bacteria commonly found in soil, dust, vegetation, cereal products, herbs & spices, dried foods, milk and dairy products, meat and meat products.

## How do I know that I have Bacillus food poisoning?

Diagnosis can only be confirmed by testing a sample of your faeces. This is usually at the request of your doctor .

## How is it spread?

Bacillus bacteria form spores during unfavourable growth conditions. These spores are heat-resistant and can survive cooking. If the food is cooled slowly or kept warm before serving they will germinate. The bacteria will then multiply rapidly at such temperatures and produce a toxin in the food. This toxin is very stable and will not be destroyed by subsequent re-heating. It cannot be spread from person to person.

*Bacillus cereus* food poisoning is mainly associated with rice dishes, and occasionally with pasta, meat or vegetable dishes, dairy products, soups, sauces, and sweet pastries. *Bacillus subtilis* is associated mainly with meat or vegetables in pastry, cooked meat or poultry products, and occasionally with bakery items such as bread or crumpets, sandwiches, and ethnic meat or seafood dishes

## What are the symptoms?

Onset can be sudden, but the effects are usually over fairly quickly. The symptoms normally fall into one of the following patterns:

<i>Bacillus cereus</i> -emetic type	nausea and vomiting
<i>Bacillus cereus</i> -diarrhoeal type	diarrhoea & abdominal pain
<i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting
<i>Bacillus licheniformis</i>	diarrhoea and abdominal pain

## How soon after exposure do symptoms occur?

<i>Bacillus cereus</i> -emetic type	1 to 5 hours
<i>Bacillus cereus</i> -diarrhoeal type	8 to 16 hours
<i>Bacillus subtilis</i>	10 mins to 4 hours
<i>Bacillus licheniformis</i>	2 to 14 hours

## **Do infected people need to stay away from work or school?**

All cases of gastroenteritis are regarded as potentially infectious. People should normally stay away from work or school until free from diarrhoea and vomiting. Inform your employer, child carer, nursery or school as soon as possible to help them identify if they may have an outbreak. Infected people in 'high risk' groups must stay away while they have symptoms. This includes:

- food handlers involved with unwrapped or ready to eat food,
- staff of health care facilities in contact with food or patients,
- children aged below 5 years attending nurseries, playgroups, etc
- older children and adults who may find it difficult to implement good standards of personal hygiene

Such people may return to work or school when they have recovered, provided that they wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

## **How can I prevent the spread of infection?**

### ***Handwashing***

This is the most important factor in preventing the spread of infection. Thoroughly wash your hands with soap in warm running water:

- AFTER using or cleaning the toilet
- AFTER touching anything contaminated by diarrhoea or vomiting
- AFTER attending to anybody who is unwell
- AFTER handling dirty laundry, clothing or bedding
- AFTER handling used nappies
- BEFORE handling, preparing, serving, or consuming food or drink

People who are ill should ideally use bactericidal liquid soap and separate towels or disposable paper tissues. A nailbrush can assist you to clean under your fingernails. Always dry your hands well as this helps to remove bacteria.

## ***Cleaning the toilet***

For as long as people are unwell:

- wipe the toilet seat with disinfectant after each use
- wash and disinfect other items like bedpans or potties after each use.
- use a cloth soaked in disinfectant to wipe the toilet seat, flush handle, washbasin taps, and door handle two or three times a day.
- clean the toilet bowl using a (toilet) brush and disinfectant. Rinse the brush by flushing the toilet, and replace in its holder .
- keep any rubber gloves used for cleaning the toilet for this use only.
- flush the toilet with the seat and lid down.

## ***Laundry***

- keep dirty laundry from anyone with food poisoning separate
- if possible remove any heavy soiling into the toilet before washing
- wash soiled clothing and bedding separately on as hot a washing programme as possible without exceeding fabric care instructions.

## ***Points to remember***

- make sure everybody follows these precautions
- assist young children to wash their hands properly

## **REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY**

**Further advice is available by contacting your Doctor or from:**

East Cambridgeshire District Council  
Environmental Services  
The Grange  
Nutholt Lane  
Ely, Cambs CB7 4EE  
Tel: 01353 665555  
Fax: 01353 616223