

FAQs – Foodborne Pathogens



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What is a foodborne pathogen?

Foodborne pathogens (viruses, bacteria, parasites, and toxins) are biological agents that can cause a foodborne illness.

What is a foodborne illness?

Foodborne illness, commonly referred to as food poisoning or stomach flu, occurs when foodborne pathogens are ingested from eating contaminated foods.

What are the most common foodborne pathogens?

Known as the “Big 6,” norovirus, hepatitis A, *Salmonella* typhi (typhoid fever), *Shigella* spp., Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (E. coli), and nontyphoidal *Salmonella* are substantially infectious pathogens that are easily transmittable.

Who is at risk?

The general population is at risk for foodborne illness, with highly susceptible populations (HSPs) being more likely to experience severe cases of foodborne illness due to being immunocompromised, being preschool age children, being older adults, and obtaining food at facilities such as custodial care or a nursing home.

What symptoms might indicate foodborne illness?

Vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), sore throat with fever, and exposed, infected cuts, burns, or wounds with pus can indicate that a person has a foodborne illness.

Fast Facts

- Norovirus can spread through fecal-oral or vomitus transmission
- Wash raw produce to eliminate potential pathogens such as *Salmonella* and E. coli.
- Once diagnosed, the “Big 6” illnesses are reportable by law
- Onset time can range from one hour to 28 days, depending on the illness

For additional information on Foodborne Pathogens:

<https://www.in.gov/health/food-protection/retail/>

