

The “BIG 6” Foodborne Illnesses

Hepatitis A

Overview:

Fecal-oral transmission, can be found in water and raw shellfish (oysters, clam, mussels), highly infectious; disease can be spread 2-4 weeks before any symptoms appear, children may show no symptoms but still spread the disease to others

Prevention:

Wash hands (especially after using the bathroom), no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food, obtain water and shellfish from an approved source

Incubation Period:

15-50 days

Symptoms:

Fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, abdominal cramps, loss of appetite, jaundice, dark urine

Shiga toxin-producing E. coli

Overview:

Young, elderly and immunocompromised at greatest risk; can cause death; E. coli is naturally found in intestines of all animals and humans

Prevention:

Cook beef (especially ground beef) thoroughly, prevent cross contamination from raw beef, use only pasteurized milk and juice

Incubation Period:

1-10 days

Symptoms:

Severe (watery to bloody) diarrhea, severe abdominal cramps, vomiting

Shigella

Overview:

Fecal-oral transmission; can be caused by water polluted with human feces; some strains similar to E. coli O157:H7; produces a toxin; young, elderly and immunocompromised at greatest risk

Prevention:

Wash hands (especially after using the bathroom), no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food, wash produce, obtain water from an approved source

Incubation Period:

8-50 hours

Symptoms:

Diarrhea (sometimes with blood/mucus), abdominal cramps, fever, vomiting

Salmonella Typhi (Typhoid Fever)

Overview:

Fecal-oral transmission, people who show no symptoms can still spread the disease to others, can cause death

Prevention:

Wash hands (especially after using the bathroom), no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food

Incubation Period:

1-30 days

Symptoms:

Sustained high fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation, abdominal cramps, headache, fatigue, rash on chest/abdomen

Norovirus

Overview:

Fecal-oral and person to person transmission, leading cause of viral foodborne illness and diarrhea in the United States, highly infectious

Prevention:

Wash hands (especially after using the bathroom), no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food, sanitize all surfaces with chlorine solution

Incubation Period:

12-48 hours

Symptoms:

Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, low fever

Nontyphoidal Salmonella

Overview:

Fecal-oral transmission, ingestion of contaminated food or contaminated water; young, elderly and immunocompromised at greatest risk; can cause death

Prevention:

Wash hands (especially after using the bathroom), no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food, prevent cross contamination

Incubation Period:

6-72 hours

Symptoms:

Diarrhea, vomiting, fever, nausea, abdominal cramps and headaches. Severe cases cause infection in urine, blood, bones, joints, or the nervous system
