

Hand washing

You can help prevent food poisoning (and other infections) by washing your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and warm water. You should always wash your hands before preparing food, looking after children, the elderly or unwell. You should also always wash your hands after:

- handling raw food, particularly meat, fish and poultry;
- going to the toilet;
- changing nappies;
- coughing or sneezing, especially if you are sick;
- handling or stroking pets or farm animals;
- gardening, even if wearing gloves;
- cleaning cat litter trays;
- touching rubbish/waste bins.

Hands should be wet before applying liquid soap. The soap should be rubbed vigorously into all areas of the hands to produce lather. The hands should be rinsed under running water.

It is very important to dry your hands thoroughly. When in hospital use the disposable paper towels and foot-operated pedal bins provided. If you require further information or help with hand washing in hospital, please contact the ward sister or charge nurse, or ask a member of the ward staff.



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Preventing food poisoning in hospital and at home



What is food poisoning?

Food poisoning is an illness that occurs after eating or drinking contaminated food or liquid.

Bacteria (germs) on or in the food are usually the underlying cause, but food poisoning may also be caused by viruses, parasites or chemicals. Symptoms may include diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and fever. Food poisoning can sometimes lead to severe illness.

Who gets food poisoning?

Anyone can get food poisoning, but young children under five years of age, the elderly, pregnant women and people who are already ill may be at greater risk of infection. They may also experience more severe illness. In rare cases food poisoning can kill.



How can you reduce your risk of getting food poisoning?

The best way to reduce your risk of food poisoning is to ensure food safety and good hand hygiene.



Food safety in hospital

Patients in hospital (including those attending hospital day services) should:

- always eat food as soon as or shortly after it has been served;
- leave uneaten food on the tray for return to the kitchen;
- never keep hot or chilled food for consumption at a later time;
- never store hot or chilled food in bedside lockers;
- only eat food provided by hospital staff.

Patients **should not** eat hot or chilled food from other sources such as hospital canteens, shops or restaurants.

Visitors should not bring hot or chilled food into hospital for patients unless agreed with the ward sister or charge nurse first.

Food safety at home

To maintain good food safety at home you should:

- ensure the temperature in your fridge is between 0°C and 5°C;
- keep cooked and ready-to-eat food separate and on a higher shelf in the fridge, from raw food;
- store raw food in sealed containers on the bottom shelf of the fridge;
- always wash raw fruit and vegetables before eating;
- avoid eating raw or lightly cooked eggs;
- cook food thoroughly, especially meat, fish and poultry, as this will destroy any germs;
- keep all kitchen surfaces and equipment clean, including knives, dishcloths and chopping boards (always disinfect chopping boards after preparing raw food);
- eat chilled ready-to-eat food (including sandwiches and pre-packed salads) as soon as or shortly after serving, and before the end of the use-by date;
- check 'use-by' dates – no food should be eaten after its 'use-by' date;
- always follow storage instructions on food.

Those at greater risk from food poisoning should avoid eating pâté, mould-ripened cheese and soft, blue-veined cheese. They should be aware that there are increased risks of food poisoning from consuming unpasteurised milk.