

# Environmental Services

# Infectious Disease

# Investigation

To: \_\_\_\_\_

Of: \_\_\_\_\_

This Department has been notified (by your Doctor)  
(by the Hospital) that you have been suffering from

In an attempt to find the source of the illness and to prevent  
anyone else from becoming ill, if you have not already done so

Please contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental Services  
Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex SS4 1BW  
Telephone: 01702 546366 Facsimile: 01702 545737 DX: 39751  
Website: <http://www.rochford.gov.uk>

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# What information will the Environmental Health Officer require?

The E.H.O. will require details of:

P	<b>Patient</b> i.e. occupation, place of work, school and name of doctor.
O	<b>Other Occupants</b> in your home who may have become infected and their occupations.
I	<b>Infection.</b> The E.H.O. will want to know details of the food you have eaten and the activities you have been involved in before you became ill.
S	<b>Symptoms.</b> The E.H.O. will want to know about the symptoms you have experienced as well as the date on which you first became ill.
O	<b>Out.</b> The E.H.O. will want to know if you have <b>eaten out</b> recently or been <b>out of the country</b> and possibly eaten contaminated food abroad or if you have taken part in any <b>outdoor sports</b> (especially water sports)
N	<b>Notification.</b> Please contact the Environmental Health department and notify them of the details required even if you feel well now!

## Remember

**The information you give may prevent someone else from becoming ill.**

## **Is it food poisoning?**

Food poisoning is an illness usually caused by eating food contaminated by bacteria (germs) or the toxins (poisons) that they produce. Food poisoning is more likely to occur in the summer when warm weather encourages the growth of bacteria in contaminated food. Symptoms may include diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach ache although there are different types of food poisoning which cause different symptoms.

Similar symptoms may be caused by other micro-organisms which are not necessarily associated with food. These infectious diseases are often caught from other people, animals or contaminated water.

## **Why have I been contacted by the Environmental Health Department?**

Environmental Health Officers (E.H.O's) have a duty to investigate infectious disease incidents including cases of food poisoning. The E.H.O wants to find out what type of food poisoning you are suffering from and what type of food you have eaten in order to determine where the bacteria may have come from. The E.H.O. can provide advice as to precautions that should be taken and inspect the suspected source of contaminated food (shop, supermarket, café, etc) in order to prevent anyone else becoming ill.

When certain people e.g. food handlers and young children have food poisoning there is an extra risk and the E.H.O. may want to take steps to ensure that the infection is not passed on.

## **I feel fine now and I am back at work, so why worry?**

Although you may feel fine now and show no food poisoning symptoms you may still have bacteria in your body and be able to infect other people, particularly if you prepare food for others to eat. A person who is a carrier (has the bacteria/germs in their body but is not ill) is a particular risk if they have close contact with or handle food for young children, elderly people and anyone who is in poor health.

## To avoid the spread of food poisoning

Do	Do not
<p>Do wash hands thoroughly before and after preparing food and always after handling raw meat. Cover any open wounds or sores with a waterproof plaster. Contact your doctor if you develop food poisoning symptoms.</p>	<p>Don't touch face and nose whilst preparing food; most people carry food poisoning bacteria in their nose and mouth</p>
<p>Do keep all perishable foods in a fridge especially cooked meat, stews, meat pies, poultry and dairy products. Only take food out just before you are going to use it. Avoid leaving perishable food at room temperature. Keep cooked and uncooked foods apart to prevent cross-contamination.</p>	<p>Don't wash pets' feeding bowls with the family dishes or allow the pet to lick from the family's dinner plates. Keep pets out of the kitchen particularly when preparing food. Wash hands thoroughly after touching pets.</p>
<p>Do ensure that frozen foods (especially poultry, meat joints, etc) are properly thawed before cooked.</p>	<p>Don't allow food to become contaminated by dust, dirt, flies, birds, rodents and animals.</p> <p>Ensure that the kitchen is kept clean. Adopt a 'Clean As You Go' system of work.</p>
<p>Do clean the toilet thoroughly after the patient has used it especially after diarrhoea. Use a household disinfectant or bleach. Use disposable paper tissues for cleaning the seat, flushing handle etc. Ensure hands are washed thoroughly using a nailbrush.</p>	<p>Don't just warm up meat and dairy products, otherwise you encourage the bacteria to grow and multiply. When reheating food ensure any bacteria are killed by heating to a temperature of about 80 degrees centigrade, right through the food.</p>

## Some germs causing gastroenteritis

Cause of infection	Sources of infection	Time for symptoms to develop	Symptoms
Salmonella	Most common food poisoning bacteria often associated with poultry, meat and dairy products. Large numbers of the bacteria are excreted by infected people.	6–72 hours usually 12–36 hours	Stomach pain, aching limbs, diarrhoea, sickness and high temperature
Campylobacter	Most frequently reported reason for acute diarrhoea caused by bacteria. Only small numbers of bacteria are enough to cause illness in certain circumstances. Sources include poultry, meat, untreated milk, untreated water, contact with domestic or wild animals and shellfish.	1–10 days, usually 2–5 days	General malaise, followed by severe diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Vomiting is rare.
E.Coli0157	Relatively uncommon cause of food poisoning. Small numbers of bacteria can cause illness, particularly in vulnerable people (young and old). Can be contracted from food, animals and human carriers.	1–6 days	Abdominal pain, fever, bloody diarrhoea, vomiting

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Dysentery (Shigella)	A highly infectious bacterial disease. Outbreaks commonly occur under conditions of crowding and poor sanitation. It is more common and more severe in children than adults. The infection may spread from person to person or directly by contaminated food.	1–7 days	Sudden attack of diarrhoea (often with blood and mucus) accompanied by fever and vomiting. Young children may suffer from convulsions.
Hepatitis A	Caused by a virus (a micro-organism smaller than a bacteria). Outbreaks usually occur when water or food (including milk, salads and raw or uncooked shellfish) have been contaminated by human excreta.	15–50 days	Sudden onset with fever, abdominal discomfort and nausea. May be followed by jaundice (yellowing of the eyes, skin and urine)
Cryptosporidium	A protozoan parasite found in the faeces of domestic, farm and wild animals, birds and man. More common in young children. Often spread via contaminated water, but person to person or animal to person is possible.	Approximately 7 – 14 days	Usually self-limiting diarrhoea, bloating, cramping abdominal pain.

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Giardia lamblia	A protozoan parasite found in the faeces of humans and animals. More common in young children. Often spread via contaminated water, but person to person or animal to person is possible.	4 – 25 days, usually 7 – 10 days	Diarrhoea, which may be chronic and relapsing
Viral Gastroenteritis	Caused by a number of different types of virus including Rota, Norwalk and Small Round Structured Viruses (SRSV). Especially common in under 5's. Spread by person to person contact, aerosol formation and environmental contamination.	12 – 48 hours (approximately)	Nausea, vomiting (sometimes projectile) and diarrhoea. Often mild with a rapid recovery (24 hours)

### Further information

Environmental Services, Council Offices, South Street,  
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Facsimile: 01702 545737, DX: 39751

For more information on food safety please visit our website  
<http://www.rochford.gov.uk> and follow the links from Business to  
Food Safety or telephone 01702 31804.



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