

Food and Waterborne Illness Fact Sheet

Contamination of food and water by protozoa, bacteria, viruses, pesticides, or heavy metals can lead to severe illness. Avoiding contaminated food and water is key to preventing illness. Depending on the contaminant, the symptoms and treatment may vary. Common contaminants include:

Cryptosporidium

Giardia intestinalis

Salmonella

Shigella

E. coli

Enterovirus

Hepatitis A

Norovirus

Leptospirosis

SYMPTOMS

- Abdominal Cramps
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Dehydration

PREVENTION

- In some locations, you may have to avoid uncooked food that may have had contact with unclean water.
- Avoid direct contact through wading, swimming, kayaking or rafting with water sources that are known to be contaminated with Leptospirosis.
- Only eat food that has been thoroughly cooked and is still hot.
- If you are preparing your own food, make sure food is stored appropriately at the proper temperature.
- Drink bottled water only from reputable sources. Avoid ice cubes made from local water sources.
- Identify if a well has been tested before drinking from it.
- Do not drink from a well that has experienced flooding unless it has an inspection date that post-dates the flooding event.
- If you must utilize non-potable water, there are water treatment techniques that can be used:
 - Boiling can effectively kill most bacterial, viral, or other microorganisms.
 - Filtration and chemical disinfection products are also available, be aware that they are only effective for certain types of contamination, and may not be sufficient for all situations.

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- These methods cannot remediate metal or chemical contamination. Never drink water near a mine or reclaimed mining area.
- Contacting contaminated water or being exposed to aerosols of contaminated water can also cause illness. Take precautions near bodies of water with known contamination, algal blooms, or large fish kills. Contact ESSR if you feel you need a respirator to perform your research activities.
- Do not allow broken skin to come into contact with water of unknown quality.
- Frequently wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water, especially after lavatory use and contact with potentially contaminated water.
- In remote areas, make sure any washing and lavatory use is at least 200 yards from any water source.
- Contact the [Occupational Health Center](#) to identify what preventative measures you can take to manage potential illness.

FIRST AID TREATMENT

- Generally, symptoms last for 24-48 hours.
- Treatment includes staying hydrated and controlling symptoms with over the counter medication.
- If the symptoms persist beyond 48 hours, or become severe (blood present in vomit or stool, development of fever, irregular breathing/heartbeat, blurred vision, etc.), seek medical attention.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CDC [Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases](#)

CDC [Traveler's Health Food and Water Safety](#)

Poison Control Center Hotline (1-800-222-1222)

Illness, injury and close call events shall be reported by submitting an [SU-17](#).

If you have questions or need support, contact EH&S's Field Safety Program at ehs_field_safety_support@lists.stanford.edu.

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