

# YOURHEALTH

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FOOD POISONING...DON'T LET IT  
SPOIL YOUR SUMMER

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SYMPTOMS AND ADVICE

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.....  
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# DON'T LET FOOD POISONING RUIN YOUR SUMMER

Food poisoning is caused by eating contaminated food. It's not usually serious and most people get better within a few days without treatment. In most cases, food or water is contaminated by bacteria, such as salmonella or E. coli or a virus such as the norovirus.



## How might I get food poisoning?

Food can become contaminated at any stage during production, processing or cooking, e.g. it can be contaminated by:

- Not cooking food thoroughly (particularly meat)
- Not correctly storing food that needs to be chilled at below 5C
- Leaving cooked food for too long at warm temperatures
- Not sufficiently reheating previously cooked food
- Someone who is ill or who has dirty hands touching the food
- Eating food that has passed its "use by" date
- The spread of bacteria between contaminated foods (cross-contamination).



## Signs and symptoms can include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea, which may contain blood or mucus
- Stomach cramps and tummy pain
- Lack of energy and weakness
- Loss of appetite
- High temperature (fever)
- Aching muscles
- Chills.

In most cases, these symptoms will pass in a few days and you will make a full recovery.

## What do I do if I think I have food poisoning?

Most people with food poisoning recover at home and don't need to see their GP. You should rest and drink fluids to prevent dehydration. Try to drink plenty of water, even if you can only sip it.

Eat when you feel up to it, but try small, light meals at first and stick to bland foods - such as toast, crackers, bananas and rice - until you begin to feel better.

Oral rehydration solutions, which are available from pharmacies, are recommended for more vulnerable people such as the elderly and those with another health condition.

## You should contact your GP if:

- Your symptoms are severe, e.g. if you're unable to keep down any fluids because you are vomiting repeatedly
- Your symptoms don't start to improve after a few days
- You have symptoms of severe dehydration, such as confusion, a rapid heartbeat, sunken eyes and passing little or no urine
- You're pregnant
- You're over 60
- Your baby or young child has suspected food poisoning
- You have a long-term underlying condition, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), heart valve disease, diabetes or kidney disease
- You have a weak immune system, e.g. because of medication, cancer treatment or HIV.

If your job involves food preparation or food handling, you should let your employer know you have been unwell and follow the local policy about when you can return to work.



# HOW'S YOUR WORK:LIFE BALANCE?

**Blurring the boundaries between work and personal life can affect your sense of wellbeing and lead to exhaustion. Signs of a poor work-life balance include:**

- Feeling unhappy about the time devoted to work
- Neglecting other aspects of your life because of work
- Feeling depressed, anxious or irritable
- Thinking about work a lot outside work hours
- Working longer hours than you should
- Constantly juggling life and work
- Work having a negative affect on your personal life including home life and relationships.

## Tips for a good work-life balance

- Switch off your work phone outside work! And do you really need to check those emails?
- Speak up when demands are too much - take responsibility for your work-life balance
- Take proper breaks at work, including your full lunch break
- If you do need to bring work home, use a certain room and then close the door on it
- Try to reduce stress through exercise, relaxation or hobbies
- Don't sacrifice exercise, leisure activities and friendships for the sake of work.



## STRESSED? THERE'S AN ANSWER...

Stress is our body's response to pressures from a situation or life event.

When we encounter stress, our body is stimulated to produce stress hormones that trigger a "flight or fight" response and activate our immune system. This response helps us to respond quickly to dangerous situations and can help you stay focused, energetic and alert. The problem occurs when our body gets stressed in inappropriate situations.

Once you recognise you are stressed, try to identify and address the underlying causes. Sort the possible reasons into those with a practical solution, those that will get better anyway given time and those you can't do anything about. Take control by taking small steps towards the things you can improve.

Set yourself realistic expectations and if you feel overwhelmed, ask people to help with the tasks you have to do and say no to the things you cannot take on. Think about a plan to address the things that you can.

If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, speak to your OH provider or GP.

Sources: NHS, Food Standards Agency, Mental Health Foundation, Stress Management Society, DHC