

What should I do if I believe that food I've eaten has made me unwell?

There are about 2.4m cases of foodborne illness (known as food poisoning) in the UK every year. These contribute to the 18 million infectious intestinal diseases (IID) suffered. 60% of infectious intestinal diseases are never attributed to a specific cause.

Fortunately, most cases of food poisoning led to a few uncomfortable and inconvenient days, followed by a quick and full recovery. However, there can be serious and long-term health complications caused by food poisoning. In 2020 research estimated that 180 people died from food poisoning. Food poisoning should be taken seriously.

What causes foodborne illness/ food poisoning?

There are over 15 known pathogens which can cause food related illness. Each pathogen is associated with different foods. Pathogens that cause intestinal symptoms can be spread person to person, be picked up from the environment, from pets or other animals and can be ingested via contaminated food and drink. The only way to confirm whether illness is food related, and which pathogen caused illness, is by providing a sample for a laboratory test.

Common causes of food poisoning in the UK, onset times and duration of illness:

Illness and symptoms are often more severe in the very young, elderly and those who are immune compromised.

Campylobacter – symptoms usually start 2-7 days after contaminated food is eaten and can last for 2-10 days.

Salmonella – symptoms can start as earlier as 7 hours after contaminated food is eaten, however this is rare, usually symptoms appear 1 – 8 days later, and can last for 4 days.

E.coli – symptoms take 3-8 days to start after contaminated food consumed, and can last for 5-10 days.

Norovirus – symptoms normally take 1-2 days to start after contact with the virus, and can last 2-3 days.

What should I do now?

If you think you have food poisoning and are currently unwell, you should contact your GP to ensure your health is cared for and to provide a sample. You should also contact food.concerns@royalgreenwich.gov.uk We will send you a detailed questionnaire asking you to provide information about food, drink and activities during the few days before you became unwell.

What will we do?

When we receive your completed questionnaire, we will analyse the information to determine whether further investigation is required. This may include a desktop review of the premises, food hygiene rating, any similar complaints and premises food safety records or a visit to the premises to review current conditions. At the end of the investigation, we will let you know any significant outcomes.