Food Poisoning, Generic

Your caregiver thinks today you may have an illness caused by food and that you can be treated without finding out the exact cause.

CAUSES

Poor personal hygiene, improper cleaning of storage and preparation areas, and unclean utensils cause infection or tainting (*contamination*) of foods. Always cleanse thoroughly all surfaces that have been in contact with raw meat, poultry and eggs. Mishandling of raw and cooked foods allows bacteria to grow. The temperature range in which most bacteria grow is between 40° F (5° C) and 140° F (60° C). Raw and cooked foods should not be kept in this danger zone. Under cooking or improper processing of home-canned foods can cause serious food poisoning. Since food-poisoning bacteria are often present on many foods, knowing the characteristics of such bacteria is very helpful to prevent and control these possibilities.

- The major source of the bacteria in the environment is waste materials of your body (*feces*) of infected humans. Sometimes animals are infected. Feces contaminated food and untreated water are common sources of an illness carried by food.
- Control of foodborne illness is possible with precautions. These should include adequate cooking. Avoid recontamination of cooked meat by contaminated equipment, water, or infected food handlers.

PREVENTION

The first step in preventing food poisoning is to assume that all foods may cause foodborne illness. Follow these steps to prevent food poisoning:

- Wash your hands, food preparation surfaces and utensils thoroughly before and after handling raw foods to prevent re-contamination of cooked foods.
- Keep refrigerated foods below 40° F (5° C).
- Serve hot foods immediately or keep them heated above 140° F (60° C).
- Divide large volumes of food into small portions for rapid cooling in the refrigerator. Hot, bulky foods in the refrigerator can raise the temperature of foods already cooled.
- Remember the danger zone is between 40° F (5° C) and 140° F (60° C).
- Follow approved canning procedures.
- Heat canned foods thoroughly before tasting.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.**
- Infants, older persons, women who are pregnant, and anyone with a compromised immune system are especially susceptible to foodborne illness. These people should never consume raw fish, raw seafood, or raw meat type products.

Following these simple rules of good food handling prevents food poisoning.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- **For infants**: use oral rehydration solutions (ORS) or suitable alternatives for fluid restoration. After correction of *dehydration* (loss of body fluids), other clear liquids that are appealing to the child may be added.
- **For infants and children**: Record fluid intake and urine output. Dry diapers for longer than usual may indicate dehydration. Diet may be added to as tolerated.
- **For children and adults**: drink small amounts of fluids frequently, so that you are drinking at least 2 quarts a day for an adult, or as your caregiver suggests for a child. Take sips frequently, not overloading your stomach with too much fluid at one time as this may worsen the nausea.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. **Do not give aspirin to children** because of the association with Reye 's syndrome.
- Until the diarrhea is under control, you should give clear liquids only, that is, anything you can see through such as water, broth, jello water, apple juice or other soft drinks. (Carbonated soft drinks should be allowed

to go “flat” before drinking).

- Once you or your child are tolerating clear liquids and keeping them down, you may progress to full liquids, soups, juices, and ice cream or sherbet. If they are well tolerated, begin to add bland foods to the diet.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR DIARRHEA

Avoid:

- Milk.
- Tobacco.
- Extremely hot or cold fluids.
- Fruits.
- Alcohol.
- Too much intake of anything at one time.

When the diarrhea stops, you may add the following foods that help the stool to become more formed:

- Rice
- Bananas
- Dry toast
- Apples without the skin

Once these foods are tolerated, you may add low-fat yogurt and low-fat cottage cheese. They will help to restore the normal *bacterial* (germ) balance in the bowel.

Wash hands well after using the bathroom to avoid spreading bacteria or viruses.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child are unable to keep fluids down.
- Vomiting or diarrhea develop and or become persistent. Vomiting and diarrhea may rapidly cause dehydration in an infant or child and must be rapidly treated. Give infants or children oral rehydration solution or suitable alternatives for fluid restoration. Giving only water may cause problems by diluting the salts in the blood.
- Abdominal pain develops or increases or localizes. (Right sided pain can be appendicitis and left sided pain in adults can be diverticulitis.)
- A high fever develops, an oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C), for over 3 days.
- Diarrhea becomes worse or contains blood or mucous.
- You or your child experience weakness, dizziness, fainting or extreme thirst.
- You notice significant weight loss. Checking weight 3 to 4 times per day in babies and children will help verify adequate fluid replacement. Your caregiver will tell you what loss should concern you or suggest another visit to your personal physician.
- Weigh yourself or your child today. Compare this to your home scale and record all weights and time and date weighed. Try to check weight at the same times every day.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Document Released: 01/06/2009 Document Re-Released: 01/09/2011
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