

MAKING A COMPLAINT

Whether buying food in a local shop or eating out in a restaurant, you are entitled to expect that management is committed to good food safety practices. Everybody is also entitled to bring any lapses of hygiene to the attention of management

If you suspect you are suffering from food poisoning after eating out you should contact your local GP and arrange for a stool sample to be taken as a way of confirmation of the illness, and also contact your local EHO.

Even if your food poisoning is not confirmed by a doctor, you should still contact your local EHO who will record and follow up the report as an alleged food poisoning incident.

When making a complaint, the EHO will require relevant information from you. This may include:-

- where and when you have recently eaten,
- what you have recently eaten both at home and in other premises
- whether you have been on holidays,
- if you are a food worker,
- whether or not other people have been sick either following a meal you have shared or in the immediate days around the time you became unwell.



HOW DO I MAKE A COMPLAINT?

There are two ways of making a complaint to the Environmental Health Service

- You can contact your local HSE Environmental Health office directly see www.hse.ie for details.
- You can log your complaint with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland on LoCall 1890 336677 or via their website www.fsai.ie. They will in turn pass your complaint onto the relevant Environmental Health office.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- An investigation will be carried out on foot of your complaint which may include an inspection of the premises, samples being taken, food business records being inspected.
- Due to legal constraints any information gained by virtue of inspections carried out following complaints cannot normally be disclosed.
- The HSE does not make any commitment as to whether or not an enforcement action will be taken as a result of a complaint.
- The HSE will not seek any compensation on your behalf. If you want compensation you will need to pursue a civil legal action.
- Where applicable the EHO will contact you to notify you that an investigation of the complaint has occurred.

For further information on food safety and infectious diseases please contact your local Environmental Health Officer or log on to www.fsai.ie www.safefoodonline.ie www.hpssc.ie

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HSE
ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH

**FOOD
POISONING
COMPLAINTS**

Do you suspect you are sick as a result of eating contaminated food?

If so, contact your GP for confirmation and treatment and your local HSE Environmental Health Officer to report your complaint.



WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Food businesses are inspected by Environmental Health Officers (EHO) working for the Health Service Executive (HSE). As part of their daily duties, EHOs deal with several types of food safety complaints from members of the public and medical profession. It is very important if you have a complaint regarding a food business that it is brought to the attention of the Environmental Health Service, so that it can be investigated. If other people report illness associated with similar products or premises, your report could help identify a potential food poisoning outbreak.

Food Poisoning Complaints

Almost everyone has at one time or another had some form of stomach upset related to food poisoning. Food poisoning bacteria are very common and can be found in most raw foods of animal origin and sometimes in water and soil. Food poisoning is preventable.



SYMPTOMS OF FOOD POISONING

Food poisoning may include one or more of the following symptoms: Vomiting, Diarrhoea, Nausea, Cramps, Flu-like symptoms e.g. headaches, high temperature etc.

Food Poisoning can have serious consequences, especially for the very young, the elderly and those already ill. It weakens general health and if symptoms persist, affected persons should seek medical attention.

Depending on the type of food poisoning bacteria involved, the onset of food poisoning symptoms can range from 1 to 72 hours after eating the contaminated food. It is recommended that you contact your GP immediately. Confirmation that you have food poisoning is usually obtained by submitting a stool sample to your GP who will forward it to the laboratory for analysis.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Some of the more serious forms of food poisoning bacteria cause Infectious Diseases, e.g., Salmonellosis, campylobacter infection. These infectious diseases together with other food poisoning diseases such as botulism or listeriosis must by law be notified to the HSE by hospitals, GPs etc.



The reason some illnesses are termed infectious is because during and after recuperation, patients may still carry the bacteria in their digestive system. This phase of the illness is termed 'carrier stage'.

While this stage will not re-infect the patient, the food poisoning bacteria may be passed from the patient to other persons, for example, by faecal contamination of food.

Transmission to other persons can be prevented by good hygiene practices, such as thorough hand washing in hot water, soap and a nail brush after using the toilet. The use of a small separate hand towel is also recommended. Similar precautions should also be taken by parents changing the nappies of young children carrying the bacteria.

FOOD WORKERS

In certain cases food workers with food poisoning will be prohibited from returning to work until the HSE is satisfied that he/she is no longer a carrier. This is usually determined by the analysis of faecal samples.