

Staphylococcus aureus

This leaflet tries to answer some of the questions you might have about *Staphylococcus aureus*.

What is it?

Staphylococcus bacteria cause food poisoning by producing a toxin. They are found on the skin of 40% of people.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms may vary, but yours may have included:

- sickness;
- diarrhoea; and
- stomach pain.

Symptoms usually start 2-6 hours after infection with the bacteria.

What about the mess?

- If you have to clear up vomit or other mess, take care and wear rubber gloves. Scoop up what you can with a dustpan or paper towel. Rinse down a WC, don't use a sink that is used for food preparation or washing up. Wash what is left with cloths, and warm soapy water. Pour dirty water down a WC afterwards. Clean all cloths and equipment with dilute bleach (1 eggcup in a small bucket of warm (not hot) water);
- Wash fouled sheets and clothing straight away. Fold them so that you don't touch the dirty parts. Wash on as hot a wash as possible. Do not over fill the washing machine;
- Household hygiene is very important, disinfect the WC area particularly the flush handle, basin taps and light switches; and
- Make sure everyone uses his or her own towel and face cloth.

How did I catch it?

The usual way is eating or drinking something containing *Staphylococcus* particularly:

- cooked meats and poultry; and
- other ready to eat foods

that are handled and contaminated by infected people.

How long does it last?

Symptoms last between 12 hours and 2 days.

How is it treated?

There is not a specific treatment for *Staphylococcus* food poisoning.

It is important to keep drinking (clear fluids such as water or dilute squash are a good idea) to stop dehydration.

Can I give it to some one else?

Direct person to person spread is unusual but as the organism appears on human skin and faeces, hands that are not washed can spread the infection.

When can I go back to work/school/nursery?

If you work with food, are under 5 years old attending school/nursery or care for vulnerable people you should stay away until the diarrhoea has stopped for 48 hours. You must still maintain good personal hygiene when you return.

Other children should not return to school until symptoms have stopped.

The Facts about

Staphylococcus aureus



What can I do to prevent getting it again?

1. Food

- If you are ill avoid preparing food for your self or others;
- Reduce the time between preparing and eating food;
- Be careful not to spread the organism to ready-to-eat food such as cold meats and salad;
- Clean and disinfect worktops after preparing food; and
- Make sure your fridge and freezer are working properly. The temperatures should be 1-4⁰C and minus 18⁰C respectively.
(If you do not have a fridge thermometer, why not buy one.)

2. Wash your hands

Everyone in the household should take care to wash their hands properly with soap and rinse them under running water after using the toilet and ...

- after you've cleared up diarrhoea;
- after you've been nursing ill people;
- after you've handled laundry or changed nappies;
- before you cook or eat; and
- often during the preparation of food (especially after handling raw meat).

An antibacterial soap is an additional precaution.

For further information contact

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