

ADVICE TO A FAMILY WITH A CASE OF INTESTINAL INFECTION



The following notes are intended as a guide to persons who are suffering with or caring for a case of food poisoning or suspected food poisoning, probably of bacterial or viral origin.

DOCTOR NOTIFICATION.

If you visit your GP or local hospital and it is suspected you have food poisoning or gastro-enteritis, then your GP has a legal duty to notify this Department.

An investigating officer will contact you to give advice, information and also to arrange for collection of a faecal specimen if necessary.

In all matters concerning the personal health of the patient or any contacts who may be exhibiting symptoms you must obtain personal health advice from your own General Medical Practitioner.

WHERE DID I GET THE ILLNESS?

The sources of food poisoning/food borne illness are:-

- i) Contaminated foods, such as undercooked meats and poultry, raw milk or even polluted drinking water.
- ii) Pets and farm animals.
- iii) Human - the organisms which causes these illnesses can be transmitted from person to person as they are excreted in the faeces.

SYMPTOMS

There are a variety of symptoms including diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pains, fever, headaches or giddiness. You may experience one, or more of these symptoms depending on which infection you have.

HOW CAN I PREVENT MY FAMILY FROM BECOMING ILL?

The infection can be spread from person to person by not washing hands properly after using the toilet, by contaminated food or by hand to mouth transfer from contaminated materials.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Good personal hygiene will help to ensure you do not pass the infection on to your family or

close friends. Ensure that everyone washes their hands thoroughly using soap and warm water after visiting the toilet, nappy changing, handling pets and always before preparing any foods. Supervise children wherever possible.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Soiled clothing and bed linen should be washed in a domestic washing machine in a 'hot' cycle. If heavily soiled, as much faecal matter as possible should be carefully removed and then flushed away in a toilet. It is recommended that such items are soaked in a household disinfectant solution before washing in order to reduce contamination. Always thoroughly wash hands after handling soiled laundry.

Toilet seat, rim, bowl, flush handles, toilet door handle and bathroom taps must be disinfected after use with steriliser, disinfectant or sanitiser such as Milton, Domestos or Anti-bacterial spray. Pour neat steriliser around toilet bowl at night and flush in morning.

Toys or other similar articles which are normally shared by children within the household should be separated during the period of infection, so that otherwise healthy children do not play with the same toys as the patient. Toys used by the patient should be disinfected (if possible) by wiping with a cloth containing a mild disinfectant and then rinsing with clean water before they are handled by the other children.

WHERE TO FIND US AND WHO TO CONTACT

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Public Health Department
Civic Centre
Castle Street
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8AN**

Contact Numbers:

Susan Gow	725260
Sarah Larkin	725383
Sarah Hopkins	725029
Sian Rapson	725338
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CONTACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE

- For most food poisoning type infections segregation or quarantining of patients is not usually necessary, except in cases of highly infectious diseases, but it is still wise not to let the patient mix closely with the very young or elderly as they can be more susceptible to picking up an infection. Playing with children should be restricted as much as possible and play with children outside of the immediate family is not advisable until the patient has recovered from their symptoms. Once the symptoms have cleared up, normal social contact can usually be resumed within a few days.

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK, NURSERY OR SCHOOL?

- It may be necessary to temporarily exclude infected children from playgroups, nurseries, childminders or school and certain other infected persons from work, e.g. food handlers, nursery workers, nurses or carers for the elderly, etc. until they have been completely recovered for 48 hours, or sometimes clear faecal specimens (negative result) are required. An officer of the Department will inform you when you are able to resume these activities.

TEN TIPS FOR FOOD SAFETY

- Take chilled and frozen food home quickly - then put in your fridge or freezer at once.
- prepare and store raw and cooked food separately - keep raw meat and fish at the bottom of your fridge.
- keep the coldest part of your fridge at 0 - 5°C - get a fridge thermometer.
- check 'use-by' dates - use food within the recommended period.
- keep pets away from food - and dishes, utensils and worktops.
- wash hands thoroughly - before preparing food, after going to the toilet or after handling pets.
- keep your kitchen clean - wash worktops and utensils between handling food that is cooked, and food that is not.
- do not eat food containing uncooked eggs - keep eggs in the fridge.
- cook food well - follow the instructions on the pack - If you reheat make sure it is piping hot, and only reheat once.
- keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold - don't just leave them standing around.