

## DO YOU HAVE A FOODBORNE ILLNESS?

Foodborne illness occurs when a food, drink, or water contaminated with a disease-causing pathogen is consumed. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that about 48 million people get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases each year in the U.S.

**Do you suspect you have a foodborne illness?** Do you have any of the symptoms listed in the section below? Here is what you should do:

1. Go to the doctor
2. Contact your local health department
3. Email [FOODBORNETEXAS@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:FOODBORNETEXAS@dshs.texas.gov)

Going to the doctor allows your foodborne illness to be confirmed with testing, and perhaps be linked to a foodborne illness outbreak. Contacting the local health department will spark investigations at locations where you ate or purchased food. Emailing [FOODBORNETEXAS@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:FOODBORNETEXAS@dshs.texas.gov) will allow information collected to be shared with public health partners, potentially connecting cases across the state and country to the same outbreak.

## SYMPTOMS OF FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Foodborne illness symptoms vary from mild to life threatening. Susceptible populations including very young, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems are at greatest risk of becoming ill and seriously harmed.

The most common symptoms of foodborne illness are nausea, upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever. Symptoms presented and their severity depend on the specific type of foodborne illness. If you have any of the following symptoms, please see a doctor:



**Bloody  
diarrhea**



**Frequent  
vomiting**



**Diarrhea  
(3 + days)**



**High fever  
(over 102°F)**



**Signs of  
dehydration**

For more information about the Texas Rapid Response Team contact [tishara.coleman@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:tishara.coleman@dshs.texas.gov)

## NEXT STEPS AFTER BEING DIAGNOSED

If you have been diagnosed with a foodborne illness you may be contacted by an epidemiologist or other public health official. Information you provide may solve the outbreak and help prevent future outbreaks of the same type. You may be asked to provide information about your food history, including the following questions:

- Illness
  - When did you first feel sick?
  - How many days were you sick?
  - What symptoms did you have?
- Where have you eaten?
  - Did you go to any restaurants?
  - Did you attend any special events?
  - Did you attend any potlucks or holiday meals?
- Who did you eat with?
  - Are they sick also?
  - Did you eat the same meals?
- What types of foods have you eaten over the past 2 weeks?
  - Did you eat meat or poultry?
  - Did you eat fresh vegetables?
  - Did you eat seafood?
- Sources of food?
  - Where do you buy food?
  - Do you have receipts or labels?
  - Did you use a shopper card?
  - Do you still have any of the food (*if it is known to cause the illness*)?

### DID YOU KNOW?

Foodborne illness pathogens have different **incubation periods**, which is the time it takes for symptoms to appear after infection.

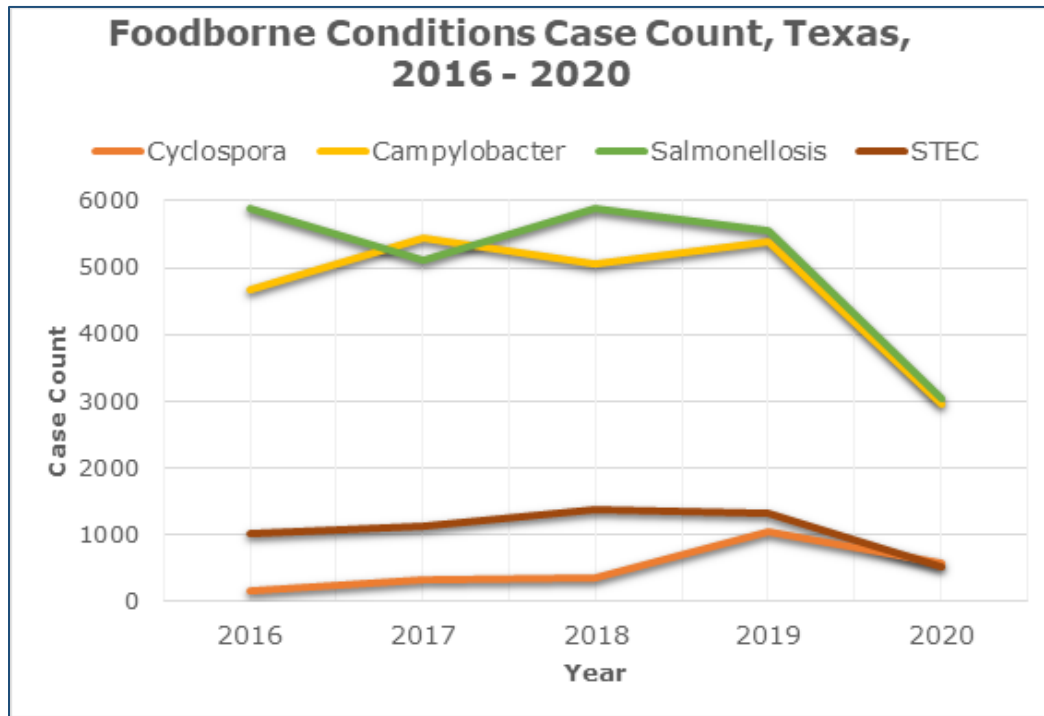
Incubation periods can vary from a few hours, to 2 weeks, or even longer. This means that the last meal you ate, is not likely to be the meal that made you sick.

For more information on foodborne illness incubation periods, see [CDC Guidelines for Confirming Cause of Foodborne Disease Outbreaks](#)

This information is collected by using a hypothesis generating questionnaire. The questionnaire collects standardized information about food consumed and other exposures, such as other sick people and animals. The information you provide may help solve the ongoing outbreak and prevent similar outbreaks from happening in the future. To learn more about hypothesis generating questionnaires, see the [CDC Foodborne Disease Outbreak Investigation and Surveillance Tools](#).

## FOODBORNE ILLNESS IN TEXAS

Every year, Texas has thousands of cases of foodborne illness. The most common foodborne diseases affecting Texas are Salmonellosis, Campylobacteriosis, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC), and Cyclosporiasis.



[Salmonellosis](#) is caused by the bacteria *Salmonella*. There are many different types of *Salmonella*, and they can contaminate a variety of different foods and drinking water.

[Campylobacteriosis](#) is caused by *Campylobacter* bacteria. It is associated with eating raw or undercooked poultry or meat.

[Escherichia coli \(E. coli\)](#) are bacteria associated with many diseases, including foodborne illness. Severe cases of infection may lead to renal failure. Like *Salmonella*, *E. coli* can contaminate a variety of different foods.

[Cyclosporiasis](#) is caused by the microscopic parasite *Cyclospora cayetanensis*. It is associated with eating contaminated fresh produce such as fresh herbs, berries, and leafy greens. Outbreaks in the U.S. are seasonal and occur between May-August annually.

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## Texas Foodborne Notifiable Conditions

Texas is affected by many other foodborne organisms, including reportable conditions. Specific information about Texas notifiable conditions must be provided to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) by health care providers, hospitals, laboratories, schools, and other parties.

The table below shows cases of reportable foodborne illness in Texas from 2016-2020.

**Reported Foodborne Conditions in Texas, 2016 - 2020**

Condition	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Botulism, infant	7	8	11	11	10
Botulism, foodborne	1	0	1	5	0
Botulism, other	0	0	1	0	0
Botulism, wound	1	0	0	2	9
Campylobacteriosis	4667	5449	5048	5391	2949
Cyclosporiasis	148	319	353	1039	581
Hemolytic uremic syndrome	14	24	18	22	5
Hepatitis E	22	20	31	12	9
Listeriosis	34	42	54	65	33
Salmonellosis	5901	5113	5888	5565	3032
<i>Salmonella</i> Paratyphi*				10	4
<i>Salmonella</i> Typhi	37	27	29	36	10
Shiga toxin-producing <i>Escherichia coli</i> (STEC)	1015	1131	1363	1324	513
Yersiniosis	58	46	35	230	117

\**S. Paratyphi* until 2019 was reported as part of *Salmonellosis* condition

For more information about notifiable conditions in Texas, see the [Texas DSHS Infectious Disease Prevention Section Notifiable Conditions](#) page.

## Foodborne Illness Investigation Course Pilots Requested

The Texas Rapid Response Team is developing an online, on-demand Foodborne Illness Investigations course. Course pilots are needed! If you are interested in piloting the course, contact [tishara.coleman@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:tishara.coleman@dshs.texas.gov). Course review will take place in Spring 2023.

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