

Jonathan Rosenfeld's Nursing Homes Abuse Blog

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Elderly Nursing Home Patients Are Particularly Susceptible To Illness Related To Contaminated Food



Older adults are particularly susceptible to food poisoning because as you get older, your immune system does not respond as quickly and as effectively to infectious organisms as when you were younger. In addition, many nursing home residents already have weakened immune systems due to age, illness, and disease, and their bodies cannot handle the added onslaught caused by food poisoning.

For example, [dehydration](#), which is a common and serious complication of food poisoning, is also a risk factor for the development of [pressure sores](#), which can present a serious risk to nursing home residents. Therefore, nursing homes should take extra precautions to ensure that food is served in a safe, timely, and proper manner so as to prevent contamination.

[Food poisoning](#) (also known as food-borne illness) occurs when you consume contaminated food or beverages. Food can be contaminated by bacteria, viruses, parasites, or their toxins. In the United States, there are an estimated 76 million cases of foodborne disease each year.

The CDC estimates that foodborne diseases cause 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths each year. Depending on the source of contamination, symptoms may vary. Oftentimes, people think they have the “stomach flu.” However, most types of food poisoning cause the following symptoms:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Watery diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Stomach cramps
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Fever

These symptoms can start as soon as just hours after eating the contaminated food or days later. Illness usually lasts from 1-10 days. Treatment for food poisoning is usually done with

Jonathan Rosenfeld represents victims of nursing home abuse and neglect throughout the country. For more information please visit Nursing Homes Abuse Blog (www.nursinghomesabuseblog.com), Bed Sore FAQ (www.bedsorefaq.com) or call Jonathan directly at (888) 424-5757.

fluid replacement and control of nausea and vomiting. In serious cases, hospitalization might be necessary.

Food can be contaminated by bacteria, viruses, parasites, or their toxins. This contamination can occur at any point in the food production (growing, harvesting, processing, storing, shipping, and preparing). The most common cause of food poisoning is cross-contamination (the transfer of harmful organisms from one surface to another).

Some common contaminants include: Campylobacter, Clostridium perfringens, [Escherichia coli \(E. coli\)](#), [Giardia lamblia](#), [Hepatitis A](#), Listeria, [Norovirus](#), [Rotavirus](#), Salmonella, [Shigella](#), Staphylococcus aureus, Vibrio vulnificus, and [Botulism](#).

Salmonella and Campylobacter are bacteria that commonly cause food poisoning. They are normally found in warm-blooded animals such as cattle, poultry, and swine. The bacteria may be present in raw meat, poultry, eggs, or unpasteurized dairy products. Another common bacterial contamination is Clostridium perfringens, which may be present in raw meat, poultry, eggs, or unpasteurized dairy products as well as in vegetables and crops that come in contact with soil.

Staphylococci, bacteria that are naturally found on human skin and in the nose and throat, can also cause food poisoning when handling food. E. coli (Escherichia coli) is found in the intestines of healthy cattle and can cause infection when people eat undercooked beef or unpasteurized milk. Shellfish and other foods that may have been exposed to sewage-contaminated water can transmit viral diseases such as Hepatitis A. Finally, [Botulism](#) is a rare but deadly form of food poisoning caused by Clostridium botulinum, which is found in improperly canned foods.

Food poisoning can be easily prevented through the following steps:

- Wash your hands, utensils, and food surfaces often
- Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods
- Cook foods at a safe temperature
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods promptly
- Defrost safely
- Throw it out when in doubt

Older adults should avoid the following because they have weakened immune systems:

- Raw or rare meat and poultry
- Raw or undercooked fish or shellfish
- Raw or undercooked eggs
- Raw sprouts
- Unpasteurized juices and ciders
- Soft cheeses, blue-veined cheese, and unpasteurized cheese
- Refrigerated pates and meat spreads
- Uncooked hot dogs, luncheon meats, and deli meats

Nursing home residents rely completely on nursing home staff to provide safe and nutritious food. When nursing homes fail to take adequate precautions, serious consequences, such as food poisoning, can occur.

If your loved one suffered an injury or death related to food poisoning at a nursing home, hospital or assisted living facility, [learn your legal rights today](#). Our team of injury lawyers remain committed to maximizing all aspects of recovery. (888) 424-5757 Anytime. Anywhere.

Resources:

The University of Chicago Medical Center: [Food Poisoning](#)

[Marler Blog](#)

Mayo Clinic: [Food Poisoning](#)

CDC: [Foodborne Illness](#)

New York Times Health Guide: [Food Poisoning](#)