



1 Introduction

Without food and water we cannot survive. Our bodies, like cars, need fuel to keep going. Cars use petrol to keep going; humans use food for growth, energy and to stay healthy. But our bodies do not respond well if the food is contaminated with unsafe substances or organisms. Common problems include stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhoea and fever. In some cases it can be much worse and eating contaminated food can result in long-term diseases and even death. It is estimated that at least 5.4 million people in Australia become ill every year as a result of food they have eaten¹.

Very often the food that makes us sick looks, smells and tastes normal. It may take up to three days or longer after eating contaminated food to become sick. A sickness caused by eating contaminated food is often called 'food poisoning', or more correctly 'food-borne illness'.

Nearly always, food-borne illness can be easily prevented. This guide explains what causes food poisoning and how we can help prevent making people ill when we handle food.



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