

Food Poisoning, all causes

Reporting Obligations

Food poisoning is designated as a disease of public health significance and is reportable under the *Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Report all suspect and confirmed cases **within one business day** to the health unit.

REPORTING FORM

Epidemiology

Aetiologic Agent:

Food poisoning refers to a category of enteric diseases that are acquired through the consumption of contaminated food or water but are not directly specified by Regulation 559/91 as a Reportable Disease. Food poisoning includes foodborne infections and intoxications caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus cereus* and *Clostridium perfringens*, scombroid fish poisoning and ciguatera fish poisoning. However, other agents such as heavy metals, chemicals, toxins, parasites, fungi, and viruses such as noroviruses, and rotaviruses may also be reported here.

Clinical Presentation:

Symptoms vary depending on the causative agent and may include vomiting, diarrhea, rashes, and allergic-type reactions following ingestion of the implicated food.

Modes of transmission:

Foodborne or waterborne.

Incubation Period:

Typically short, (30 minutes to 24 hours), but may be longer, depending on the agent.

Period of Communicability:

Varies depending on the agent.

Risk Factors/Susceptibility

General susceptibility.

Diagnosis & Laboratory Testing

Diagnosis is made by laboratory tests on specimens, usually stool, or through the identification of the causative organism and/or its toxin in food.

Advise patient to keep leftover food portions if available for testing by local health unit.

TESTING INFORMATION & REQUISITION

Treatment & Case Management

Treatment is under the direction of the attending health care provider. Collect stool culture and provide treatment recommended for causative agent.

For those presenting with diarrhea, advise patients that they may be excluded from activities in high-risk settings such as healthcare, food handling, and daycare until 24-48 hours after diarrhea resolves, OR symptom free for 48 hours after discontinuing use of anti-diarrheal medication.

Provide information on prevention strategies for food poisoning (safe food handling, hand hygiene). Public Health will follow up as needed.

Patient Information

PATIENT FACT SHEET

References

1. [Ministry of Health. Infectious Diseases Protocol - Ontario Public Health Standards, 2022.](#)

Additional Resources

1. [Government of Canada. "Food Safety."](#)
2. [Canadian Food Inspection Agency. "Causes of Food Poisoning."](#)
3. [Health Canada. "Natural Toxins."](#)
4. [Public Health Ontario: Enteric Diseases and Food-Borne Diseases](#)
5. [Public Health Ontario. "Foodborne Illness". April 2014.](#)