FOODBORNE ILLNESSES

Know how to prevent the spread of an illness caused by food!

What is it?

The term foodborne illness does not refer to a particular disease; it means that the cause of the illness came from food. Over 180 different organisms can cause foodborne illness. In 67% of cases of foodborne illness, the cause is unknown.

The source of a foodborne illness is rarely the last meal a person ate. The symptoms and times for these different illnesses may either be so similar that they are difficult to distinguish, or so unusual that a person might not recognize the illness as foodborne. Determining which organism or toxin that caused a person's illness requires professional evaluation. Columbus Public Health has staff to help make that determination.

What is an outbreak?

Foodborne illness outbreaks are defined as two or more people with similar cases of illness that had a common exposure.

What do I do when a customer calls and says they're sick?

Be proactive. The Columbus Public Health Foodborne Illness Investigation Team is here to help you. Please take a name and a phone number of the customer and let them know that you will be forwarding the complaint to Columbus Public Health, Foodborne Illness Investigation Team. Save any leftover food in the refrigerator and date it. We will contact you as soon as possible.

Do I have to call the Health Department?

Yes. In the State of Ohio, <u>anyone</u> who knows of a <u>possible</u> foodborne outbreak must report it to the local health department. That means if a customer calls and reports that 2 or more of their party ate food from your business and became ill afterwards, you are required to report that information to the local health department for investigation. The purpose of an investigation is not to blame the business. It is to determine the cause and prevent the spread of illness to anyone else.

To report Foodborne Illness to Columbus Public Health...

- Call 645-1791 or
- Fax to Foodborne Illness 645-7155 or
- e-mail information to health@columbus.gov