

Food Safety Starts with Knowing the Facts



From foodborne illness to restaurant inspections, learn what to look for, when to take action, and where to find answers.

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Was It Really the Last Thing I Ate? (Last Meal Bias)



The food that made you sick may not be the last thing you ate. Some foodborne illnesses take two to three days, or even longer, before symptoms appear. That means something you ate several days ago could be the cause of your illness.

SCENARIO:

You ate tacos at noon today, and then started vomiting around 7 p.m. It's natural to blame the tacos. But the exposure could have happened yesterday ... or several days ago.

Foodborne Illness Symptoms Can Start Hours or Days Later

Contaminant	Onset of Symptoms	Likely Symptoms
Staphylococcus	30 minutes – 8 hours	Sudden nausea, vomiting, sometimes diarrhea.
Norovirus	12 hours – 48 hours	Sudden nausea, vomiting, watery diarrhea, low-grade fever, fatigue.
Campylobacter	2 days – 5 days	Diarrhea (watery or bloody), fever, may cause nausea and/or vomiting.
Listeria	24 hours – 2 weeks	Sudden nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea.

What Made You Sick: Was it Food or Another Exposure?

The tacos are looking guilty ... but are they really to blame?

Before you point the finger at your last meal, consider this: The real culprit could be something you ate days ago or a germ you encountered along the way.

Ready to play detective? *Use this quick checklist to retrace your steps and uncover clues about what may have made you sick.*



THINK BACK, NOT JUST BACK ONE MEAL

- ☐ What did you eat during the previous week?
- ☐ Where did you eat?
- ☐ Did anyone else get sick?
- ☐ Did you attend a party, potluck, wedding, etc.?
- ☐ Did you eat grocery foods or leftovers?
- ☐ Any contact with animals?
- ☐ Do you have receipts, packaging, or leftovers?
- ☐ Any exposure to recreational water? This could include a lake, river, pool, or splash pad.

TRANSLATION STATION

Health jargon simplified so it actually makes sense.



Incubation Period

The time between coming into contact with a germ and when you first start feeling sick.

Symptom Onset

When you first started feeling sick, even if your symptoms were mild at first.

Exposure

Coming into contact with something that could make you sick.

Cross-Contamination

When harmful germs spread from one food or surface to another (i.e., raw chicken touches ready-to-eat food.)

Report a Food Safety Concern

You don't need to know which food made you sick before reporting a suspected foodborne illness. The CDC encourages reporting because it helps health departments identify patterns across multiple cases that individuals might not recognize on their own.

Report concerns to the department nearest you:

Bullhead City

(928)
758-0704

Kingman & North Strip

(928)
757-0901

Lake Havasu City

(928)
453-0712

Behind Restaurant Inspections

It's About More Than a Clean Kitchen

A restaurant may look spotless, but that doesn't always mean its food is safe. Environmental Health inspectors look beyond what customers can see to identify practices that could make people sick.



During an inspection, they check whether:

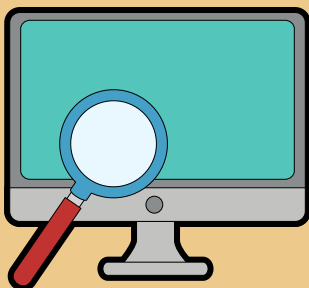
- Food is kept at safe temperatures to help prevent harmful bacteria from growing.
- Employees wash their hands properly and follow safe food-handling practices.
- Raw and ready-to-eat foods are kept separate to prevent germs from spreading.
- Food is cooked thoroughly to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.
- Food is stored, cleaned and handled safely, including proper sanitizing and pest prevention.
- Sick employees follow food safety requirements to help prevent the spread of illness.

Inspections aren't just about finding problems. They also give inspectors an opportunity to work with food establishment operators to correct unsafe practices and help prevent future illnesses.

What Do Restaurant Inspection Ratings Mean?

Rating	Mohave County's Definition
Excellent	No critical violations observed during inspection.
Satisfactory	Critical violations were identified but corrected during the inspection.
Needs Improvement	Critical violations were identified that could not be corrected during the inspection.
Unsatisfactory	The establishment required closure due to significant food safety or sanitation concerns.

A critical violation is a food safety problem that could make people sick. Examples include food kept at unsafe temperatures, improper handwashing, or raw meat contaminating food that's ready to eat.



BTW ... You Can Look Up Inspection Reports!

Mohave County publishes monthly food safety inspection reports online.

Residents can review inspection findings and learn more about how local food establishments are evaluated.

[Food Safety Inspection Reports | Mohave County](#)



Fall Food Safety Tips

Don't Let Foodborne Illness Crash the Party!



From football games and Halloween parties to Thanksgiving dinner, fall brings plenty of opportunities to gather around food. You can help keep the celebrations going while keeping germs away from your friends and loved ones with these simple tips.



FOOTBALL & TAILGATING

- Keep cold foods in a cooler at 40°F or below.
- Pack raw meat separately from ready-to-eat foods.
- Use a food thermometer when grilling:
 - Ground beef burgers should reach 160°F,
 - Chicken should reach 165°F.



HALLOWEEN PARTIES

- Those spooky snacks need some attention, too!
- Keep cheese trays, dips, cut fruit, and cream-based desserts refrigerated until serving.
- Don't leave perishable party foods sitting out for more than two hours.



THANKSGIVING & HOLIDAY MEALS

- Cook turkey and stuffing to 165°F.
- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours, using shallow containers to help food cool quickly.
- Eat refrigerated leftovers within three to four days or freeze them for later.

Source: FDA



THE TWO-HOUR RULE

Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours. If the temperature is above 90 degrees F, the limit drops to just 1 hour!

When in doubt, throw it out!

MYTHS

vs

FACTS

Environmental Health Edition



MYTH

If food smells fine,
it's safe to eat.

(Don't rely on your senses alone. Wash your hands and food preparation surfaces, keep raw meats separate from other foods, cook foods to safe temperatures, and refrigerate perishable foods promptly.)



FACT

Food can look, smell, and taste
perfectly fine and still contain
germs that make you sick.



MYTH

Food poisoning starts
right after the bad
meal.



FACT

Some illnesses start within hours
while others can take several
days.



MYTH

If I'm the only person
sick, there's no reason
to report it.



FACT

Even if you're the only person who
got sick, your report matters. The
health department may receive
similar reports from others, helping
them spot a pattern and identify
what might be making people sick.

About This Newsletter

This health literacy newsletter is brought to you by the Mohave County Department of Public Health (MCDPH). It was created in response to feedback from residents who shared that health information can feel overwhelming, insurance is confusing, medical terms aren't always explained clearly, while time with providers often feel limited. Your voices helped shape this effort and continue to guide the topics we share.

To receive this newsletter in your inbox, email Dani at lagand@mohave.gov or visit health.mohave.gov and select "Living Well in Mohave" from the Quick Links menu.



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700 W. Beale St. Kingman, AZ