

Food safety and foodborne illness

Unsafe food causes many acute and life-long diseases, ranging from diarrhoeal diseases to various forms of cancer. WHO estimates that foodborne and waterborne diarrhoeal diseases taken together kill about 2.2 million people annually, 1.9 million of them children.

Foodborne diseases and threats to food safety constitute a growing public health problem and WHO's mission is to assist Member States to strengthen their programmes for improving the safety of food all the way from production to final consumption.

Foodborne diseases remain responsible for high levels of morbidity and mortality in the general population, but particularly for at-risk groups, such as infants and young children, the elderly and the immunocompromised. In order to reduce the incidence and economic consequences of foodborne diseases, the WHO Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses (FOS) has been assisting the Member States to establish and strengthen their programmes for assuring the safety of food from production to final consumption. In this regard, WHO offers a unique capacity, through its commitment to health, to work collaboratively with government, industry and consumers, to strengthen and better focus national food safety efforts.

Key global food safety concerns include:

- spread of microbiological hazards (including such bacteria as *Salmonella* or *Escherichia coli*, *e. coli*);
- chemical food contaminants;
- assessments of new food technologies (such as genetically modified food); and
- strong food safety systems in most countries to ensure a safe global food-chain.

QUESTIONS : (Express your Ideas)

1. What do you understand about food safety and how important it is to us?
2. What are the examples of foodborne diseases? Give 2 examples and what are their symptoms?
3. What do you understand about immunocompromised individuals?
4. Why are foodborne illnesses very fatal for infants and children and also with the elderly?
5. What can you say about food safety in your country?
6. How important is food product labeling?
7. What will be the immediate care that we can give for a person with a foodborne illness and why?
8. As a health practitioner, what is the most important thing that you will tell your patient about food safety and why?