



## **Staphylococcus aureus**

This fact sheet can be made available in other languages or formats on request by contacting 0161 770 6666. For further information please see our detailed fact sheet Information for all.

### **What is staphylococcus aureus?**

Staphylococcus aureus bacteria are germs that many of us carry in our noses or on our skin, usually without any harm whatever. However they can cause skin or wound infections.

These germs can form toxins in food if it is not properly handled and, if consumed, the toxins can cause severe vomiting, abdominal cramps or sometimes diarrhoea.

The incubation period (time taken from swallowing the toxins until illness starts) is often as little as 2 to 6 hours of eating.

The illness usually lasts for between less than 12 hours and 2 days

### **Who can it affect?**

Anyone.

### **How is staphylococcus aureus caught?**

It can be caught by eating food containing toxins due to poor handling or storage.

### **Do I need to stay off work or school?**

You should stay away until you have been free from any symptoms for 48 hours.

Children should not play with other children or attend school or nursery until they are fully recovered and have been symptom free for this period of time.

If you work as a food handler or in healthcare, you must inform your employer and / or seek advice from your Environmental Health Dept.

## **How can I avoid catching it?**

By good personal hygiene. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water and dry with a clean towel:

- after going to the toilet
- after changing a baby's nappy
- after contact with pets and animals
- before preparing and eating food
- after handling raw food

By eating only food that is piping hot or properly chilled.

Avoid foods prepared by food handlers who have open cuts or spots or who have nose or throat infections.

Avoid foods that have been left out at room temperature.

## **What do I do if I or a member of my household has staphylococcus aureus?**

Make sure everybody washes their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap:

- after using or cleaning the toilet
- after looking after another person with diarrhoea / vomiting
- after changing a baby's nappy
- after handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding
- before eating or preparing food

Keep any cuts or sores covered with a waterproof dressing

Ensure each person affected has his or her own towel. You may need to supervise children to make sure they wash their hands properly.

Wash any soiled clothes, bedding and towels on a hot cycle of the washing machine. Keep soiled washing separate from the rest of the washing.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles and taps frequently with hot soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Make sure the disinfectant conforms to a British Standard and follow the instructions carefully, and keep it in a safe place away from children. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and don't use the same pair for anything else.

Where possible, stay away from others (especially vulnerable people like the elderly and the very young) until your symptoms have stopped. Also, try to avoid preparing food for anyone while you have the symptoms.

## Contacting us

If you would like more information you can contact us by:

### Writing to

Food Safety Team, Chadderton Town Hall, Middleton Road, Chadderton, Oldham, OL9 6PP

### Phoning

0161 770 4484

### Faxing

0161 770 4500

### Emailing

[env.foodsafety@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:env.foodsafety@oldham.gov.uk)

For information about food poisoning and related illnesses please see our other detailed fact sheets listed below:

- [Cryptosporidiosis](#)
- [Campylobacter](#)
- [Dysentery \(\*Shigella\*\)](#)
- [Enteric fever \(typhoid and paratyphoid\)](#)
- [E.coli O157](#)
- [Farm visits](#)
- [Food poisoning](#)
- [Giardiasis](#)
- [Hand, foot and mouth disease](#)
- [Hepatitis A](#)
- [Infectious diseases](#)
- [Salmonella](#)
- [Viral gastroenteritis \('Noroviruses'\)](#)

You can also get information from the following:

[www.hpa-nw.org.uk](http://www.hpa-nw.org.uk) - includes infection control guidance for Care Homes, Nurseries and Schools, as well as information on topical matters such as avian flu.

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk) - further details on infectious diseases.

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk) - good hygiene practices and food safety.

## **We value your comments and suggestions**

We want to provide good quality service for people in Oldham and as we are a public service you have a say in what we do. We want you to be completely satisfied with our services but to ensure this we need to know what you think. What do we do best? Where could we improve things? Do you have any ideas or suggestions? Only by listening to you can we give you the service you deserve.

If you wish to make a comment about our services you can e-mail us on

[\*\*customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:customer.feedback@oldham.gov.uk)

or you can phone us on 0161 770 4191

or you can write to us:

Complaints Officer

Strategy and Resources Directorate

PO Box 160

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Oldham, OL1 1UG

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