Cooking

Only use treated water supplies.

When travelling abroad, check that water and ice is safe to consume; if not or in doubt, make sure it is sterilised using chlorine tablets for example, or buy bottled water.

- avoid eating salads and raw fruit or vegetables that have been washed with non-sterilised water in countries where the water is not safe to consume.
- ensure that shellfish are thoroughly cooked
- keep all perishable foods in a refrigerator; your fridge should operate at below 5°C

Ensure that frozen foods are fully thawed before cooking.

Why is environmental health involved?

Doctors and Local Health Authorities have to notify the Local Authority about cases of food poisoning and Environmental Health staff investigate such cases to prevent the spread of infection, and also to help identify how the infection occurred. We also offer advice and help with any general queries.

Importantly, we try to establish the cause of the food poisoning, and we follow this up where necessary by inspecting food premises to help prevent other people suffering.

Additionally, we also provide advice on precautions that should be taken, especially to people in groups where there is a high risk of passing on the infection. This includes food handlers, young children and people who look after the very young, the elderly or the ill.
Small round-structured virus group

SRSV, sometimes known as Norwalk, includes a grouping of related viruses. SRSVs are an important cause of gastro-enteritis in older children and adults, especially in the winter months.

**SYMPTOMS**

Symptoms include:

- Nausea;
- Low grade fever;
- Vomiting;
- Sometimes diarrhoea;
- Abdominal pain; and
- Malaise.

Once the person has become infected, the main symptoms can appear between 24-72 hours afterwards. The illness may last up to 24-48 hours and is usually self limiting. Affected individuals may continue to excrete the virus after the symptoms have stopped. Because only a small number of viruses are required to cause illness, they are passed fairly easily between individuals, and epidemics often occur in families, schools etc.

**Sources of infection**

The commonest sources of infection of SRSVs are:

Shellfish particularly filter feeders such as mussels, oysters etc. as they tend to concentrate the virus in their own bodies if they are growing in infected waters. When eaten raw or improperly cooked, these shellfish can then cause illness.

The virus does not multiply in foods and temperature abuse of foods is not, therefore, relevant in this case.

Handling practices are, however, important, as cross contamination from infected foods, e.g. raw oysters to other foods, can occur.

Viruses are passed on by contact with vomit; diarrhoea; unwashed hands; contact with contaminated foodstuffs; contact with contaminated surfaces, door handles etc; eating contaminated food; close contact with infectious persons.

**Prevention**

Wash hands thoroughly:

- Before and after handling food;
- After using the toilet;
- After changing dirty nappies and soiled clothing; and
- After touching animals and/or pets.

if possible, do not prepare food for other people when suffering from food poisoning-type symptoms

Thorough cooking will kill the virus.

Normal bacteriological disinfectants to not destroy these viruses. A hypochlorite disinfectant must be used. Heat will destroy them, therefore thorough cooking will be effective.

Any food handler suffering from vomiting and/or diarrhoea must immediately cease handling food and leave the food room (this includes bar areas). Any foodstuffs handled immediately prior to illness must be heat treated or destroyed. All surfaces door handles, WCs etc. The ill person made contact with must be disinfected with hypochlorite.