

# Staphylococcal



## What is *Staphylococcus aureus*



*Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacterium which is commonly present in human nasal passage, throat, hair and skin without causing any discomfort. Staphylococci may be present in large numbers in inflamed lesions, and skin infections such as pimples and acne.

*Staphylococcus aureus* can be destroyed by normal cooking procedures, whereas the toxins produced are more resistant to heat; they may survive in food causing food poisoning.



### Staphylococcal Food Poisoning

Staphylococcal food poisoning is caused by the heat-stable enterotoxins produced by *Staphylococcus aureus*.

**Incubation Period:** Two to six hours after intake of contaminated food

**Symptoms:** Acute vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and sometimes collapse

## Foods Involved

Foods that are frequently incriminated in Staphylococcal food poisoning include:

- salad
- bakery products, such as fresh cream cakes
- milk and dairy products
- sandwiches
- meat and meat products, such as sliced and processed meat, meat pies and cured hams
- poultry and egg products



## Mode of Transmission

*Staphylococcus aureus* can be passed from men to foods. In those foods that require considerable handling during preparation but without subsequent cooking, the toxin-producing Staphylococci multiply and elaborate toxins which cause illness.



## Prevention

1. Food handling time should be reduced to an absolute minimum. Proper handling, storage and thorough cooking of food are required and do not keep food at room temperature longer than necessary.
2. If food is not to be consumed immediately, store it at temperature at or below 4°C or above 60°C.
3. Leftovers should best be discarded. Otherwise, they should be properly stored in refrigerators.
4. Persons suffering from respiratory tract infections should be temporarily excluded from food handling.
5. Promote personal cleanliness among food handlers.
6. Cover cuts or septic wounds with water-proof dressings to prevent contamination of food by bacteria.
7. Hands should be washed with water and soap before handling food and in any case, avoid touching cooked food with bare hands.
8. Do not cough or sneeze around food. Never smoke or eat in the kitchen.
9. Keep the kitchen and its surroundings clean. Wash, handle, sanitise and store utensils and equipment properly.



## Enquiry:

For further enquiries and information, please call  
**Communication Resource Unit of Food and Environmental  
Hygiene Department at 2381 6096 or 24-hour hotline 2868 0000.**