

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,  
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Worcestershire  
Health and Care  
NHS Trust



## BACILLUS CEREUS

*What is it?*

*Your questions answered*

An Information Leaflet for  
Patients and Staff

## WHAT IS IT

*Bacillus cereus* is a bacteria (germ), which can be a cause of food poisoning. There are two types — one mainly causes diarrhoea and the other mainly causes vomiting.

## WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

*Bacillus cereus* is commonly found in raw, dried or processed food, such as rice, cereals, herbs and spices. Other sources include meat and dairy products (turkey, beef, seafood and milk powder), soil, dust and water.

## HOW DO I GET IT?

*Bacillus cereus* is acquired through eating food which is contaminated and has not been cooked/warmed up to sufficiently high temperatures to kill the bacteria, or through cooked foods which have not been stored at low enough temperatures to prevent the bacteria from multiplying.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms depend upon the type of *Bacillus cereus* that has been acquired. Symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach cramps.

## WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The incubation period (the time taken from swallowing the germ until the illness starts) is usually between 1 to 16 hours, depending upon the type that has been acquired, and generally lasts between 12 to 24 hours. If symptoms occur between 1 to 5 hours the person is likely to have acquired the vomiting type, whilst symptoms of the diarrhoea type occur after 8 to 16 hours.

## IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

For most people there is no treatment except to drink plenty and rest until you feel better.

## CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

*Bacillus cereus* may be prevented by the following

- Wash hands thoroughly before any food preparation/serving.
- Cooking food at sufficiently high temperatures and keeping the food piping hot until ready to serve.
- Cooled quickly and promptly placed in a refrigerator when cool.
- If it is necessary to reheat food, ensure that it is piping hot before serving.

Sometimes it can take several weeks to reduce the level of MRSA and during this time you may be given different medication. Occasionally your doctor may also prescribe some antibiotics for you to take.

- Store and prepare raw and cooked food separately
- Wash fruit and vegetables in drinking quality water before eating/cooking.
- Avoid storing protein rich foods (meat) with cooked rice as this encourages growth of *Bacillus cereus*

## HOW SOON CAN I RETURN TO WORK OR THE CARE SETTING?

*Bacillus cereus* is not spread from person to person. Affected individuals may return to work 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. Food handlers may return to work after a bowel habit has returned to normal for 48 hours and good hygiene is observed. Further testing of stools is unnecessary. The local Council's Environmental Health Office may contact you to discuss your illness and offer further hygiene advice.

