



Trends in Foodborne Illness in the United States, 2012



Documenting trends—which illnesses are decreasing and increasing—is essential for monitoring our progress in reducing foodborne illness.

Each year, foodborne illness, commonly known as food poisoning, affects about 48 million people in the United States. Food poisoning can happen anywhere, to anyone, and from foods we might not expect. Public health surveillance, such as that conducted by the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network (FoodNet), provides needed data for tracking trends.

FoodNet: Report Card for Food Safety



[Report Card \(larger version \(reportcard.html\)\)](#)

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[\(food-safety-progress-report-2012-508c.pdf\)](#)

Each year, FoodNet reports on the changes in the number of people sickened with foodborne infections that have been confirmed by laboratory tests.

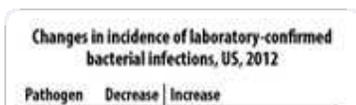
Foodborne diseases monitored through FoodNet include infections caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) O157 and non-O157, *Shigella*, *Vibrio*, and *Yersinia*, and the parasites *Cryptosporidium* and *Cyclospora*. The data collected by FoodNet also lets CDC, its partners, and policy makers know how much progress has been made in reaching [national goals](#)

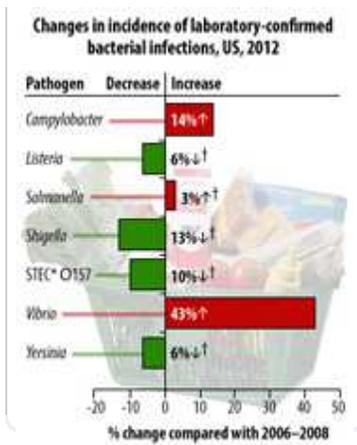
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=14>

<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html> for reducing foodborne illness.

Highlights of the 2012 FoodNet Data

Data from FoodNet, which monitors 15% of the US population, provide the best measure of trends in foodborne disease in the United States. Overall, the 2012 FoodNet data showed a lack of recent progress in reducing foodborne infections and highlight the need for improved prevention.





9,531 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection.

Figure 1 (larger version) (figure1.html)

The incidences of laboratory-confirmed *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Salmonella*, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) O157 and non-O157, *Shigella*, and *Yersinia* infection were highest among children aged <5 years.

- The incidences of *Listeria* and *Vibrio* infection were highest in adults aged ≥65 years.
- The incidences of laboratory-confirmed *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) O157, and *Yersinia* infection did not change significantly in 2012 compared with 2006–2008.
- *Campylobacter* was the second most common infection reported in FoodNet (14.3 cases reported per 100,000 population). Incidence of infection was 14% higher in 2012 compared with 2006–2008.
 - *Campylobacter* infections are usually self-limited, but may result in severe complications such as Guillain-Barré syndrome (a type of paralysis), and arthritis.
 - Exposures related to *Campylobacter* infection include consumption of undercooked poultry, raw milk, produce, untreated water, and contact with young animals.
- *Vibrio* infections are rare (0.41 cases reported per 100,000 population). Incidence of *Vibrio* infection was 43% higher in 2012 compared with 2006–2008.
 - Some types of *Vibrio* infections are often serious.
 - Many *Vibrio* infections are acquired by eating raw oysters. These infections are most common during warmer months when waters naturally contain more *Vibrio* organisms.
 - Infections can be prevented by thoroughly cooking oysters and by not exposing wounds to bodies of warm seawater.
- As a group, the incidence of infection with six key pathogens transmitted commonly through food (*Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157, *Vibrio*, and *Yersinia*) was not significantly different in 2012 than in 2006–2008.

Long-term Trends

Comparison with the first three years of FoodNet surveillance (1996–1998) shows some clear changes:

- The incidence of infections caused by *Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, STEC O157, *Shigella*, and *Yersinia* has declined, mostly in the first years.
- The overall incidence of *Salmonella* was unchanged, but the incidence of some types of *Salmonella* have increased while others have decreased.
- The incidence of *Vibrio* infection is now 116% higher.
- The overall incidence of infection with six key foodborne pathogens (*Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, *Salmonella*, STEC O157, *Vibrio*, and *Yersinia*) was 22% lower.

Recent Efforts and Next Steps

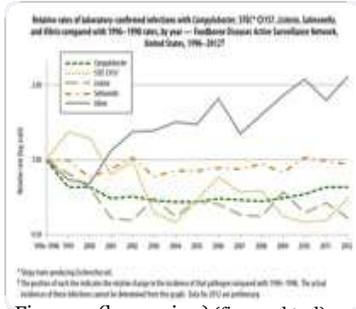


Figure 2. (larger view) ([figure2.html](#))

Most foodborne illnesses can be prevented. Some progress has been made in decreasing contamination of some foods and reducing illness caused by some pathogens. Recent efforts to reduce contamination of food and prevent these illnesses include:

- Establishment in 2011 of performance standards for *Campylobacter* contamination of whole broiler chickens in processing plants.
- Approval of more stringent time and temperature controls for oysters after harvest to prevent *Vibrio vulnificus* infections.
- The Food Safety Modernization Act (<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm242500.htm>) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>) of 2011: It gives FDA additional authority to regulate food facilities, establish standards for safe produce, recall contaminated foods, oversee imported foods, and which requires improvements in surveillance and response to outbreaks. It calls on CDC to strengthen surveillance and outbreak response.

More can be done. Determining where to target prevention efforts that will reduce foodborne infections requires continued collection of information to understand sources of infection, implementation of measures known to reduce food contamination, and development of new measures.

Key Web Links

- FoodNet (Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network) (<http://www.cdc.gov/foodnet/>)
- CDC's Estimates of Foodborne Illness in the United States (<http://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/index.html>)
- CDC and Food Safety (<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>)
- Foodsafety.gov (<http://www.foodsafety.gov/>) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- CDC's Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncezid/dfwed/>)
- United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA/FSIS) (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)
- United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) (<http://www.fda.gov/default.htm>) (<http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html>)

Page last reviewed: April 18, 2013

Page last updated: April 18, 2013

Content source: National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, Division of Foodborne, Waterborne, and Environmental Diseases

Page maintained by: Office of the Associate Director for Communication, Digital Media Branch, Division of Public Affairs

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