

Clostridium Perfringens



WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM PERFRINGENS?

“Clostridium Perfringens,” or C. Perfringens, is among the most common foodborne illnesses in the U.S., causing an estimate of one million cases per year. Outbreaks involving multiple infected individuals number in the range of ten to twenty per year. Illness results from a toxin produced by the bacteria while in the intestines. C. Perfringens can survive high temperatures and without oxygen.



HOW IS CLOSTRIDIUM PERFRINGENS CONTRACTED?

Clostridium Perfringens is a bacterium found in the intestines of humans and animals. The bacteria are always present in human intestines, but illness occurs when large numbers of the bacteria are ingested. Multiplication of the bacteria occurs when food products are improperly cooked, re-heated, or cooled and stored. Because the bacteria can multiply rapidly within the range of 68°F to 140°F, foods should be cooked to and kept at a temperature above 140°F before ingestion. Reheated foods should be cooked to at least 165°F. Food sources most commonly associated with contamination are meats, meat products and gravies.



RECOVERY AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Hospitalization can occur due to dehydration resulting from the symptoms, and treatment may include rehydration by intravenous (I.V.) means. Some deaths have been reported as a result of complications of dehydration or other circumstances. Though very rare in the U.S., a serious, often fatal illness may result when Type C strains are ingested in large number. This condition is called “Enteritis Necroticans” or “Pig-Bel Disease,” and involves infection and necrosis (the death of living bodily tissue) of the intestines.



SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of infection include watery diarrhea and exceedingly painful stomach cramps. In the large majority of cases, fever and vomiting are not reported as symptoms. Clostridium Perfringens food poisoning illness arises within six to twenty-four hours after ingestion of the contaminated food product and begins suddenly, usually lasting for twenty-four hours or less.



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