

# STEPS FOR DIAGNOSING FOODBORNE ILLNESS

When caring for a patient who may have a foodborne illness, follow these four steps:

**1. SUSPECT**

**2. IDENTIFY**

**3. TREAT**

**4. REPORT**

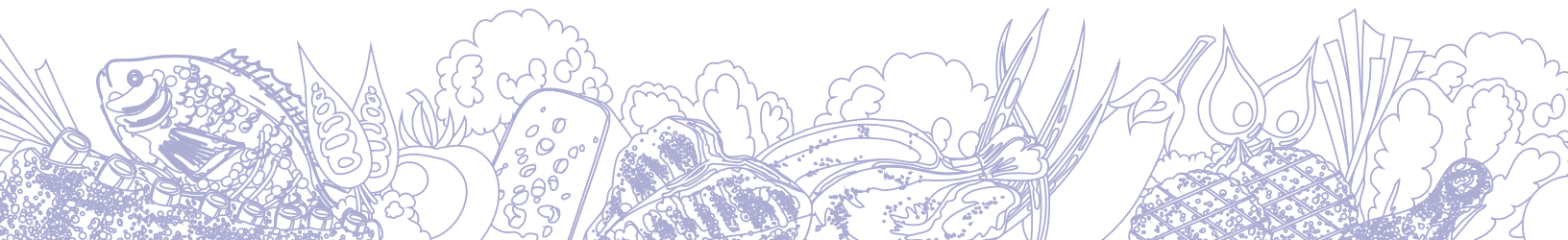
## SUSPECT

Suspect a foodborne illness is present when a patient reports gastrointestinal symptoms, vomiting, fever, or drowsiness.

Conduct a thorough history and identify underlying conditions that may place your patient at higher risk for certain infections. Risk factors for certain foodborne illnesses can include eating risky foods, such as unpasteurized dairy products and other raw foods.

It's also important to find out if your patient has:

- Been in recent contact with animals;
- Been in contact with sick friends or family;
- Has traveled abroad or has had exposure to a body of water; or
- Recently eaten at restaurants or events with groups of people served common foods.





## IDENTIFY

If your patient’s clinical presentation suggests foodborne infection is the cause of illness, consider whether laboratory testing may be indicated to narrow the diagnosis.

## TREAT

Once you suspect your patient of having a foodborne illness and order the appropriate diagnostic tests, the next step is to consider the appropriate treatment. Treatments vary widely, depending on the type and etiology of the foodborne illness. See [Diagnosis and Management of Foodborne Illnesses](#) for information on treatments for most foodborne pathogens.

## REPORT

It’s your responsibility to report certain confirmed or suspected foodborne illnesses to your local public health department. Local, State, and Federal government agencies share responsibility for dealing with foodborne illness outbreaks. Prompt reporting of foodborne diseases is critical because it allows for recognition of outbreaks, helps stem further transmission of disease, and can assist in identifying whether additional regulatory controls are needed to prevent future outbreaks.

For detailed information on reporting foodborne illnesses, check out [CFSAN’s Reporting Foodborne Illness Fact Sheet](#).

# LEARN MORE

For more information on diagnosing foodborne illnesses, review the [“Diagnosis and Management of Foodborne Illnesses”](#) primer.

Or, order the [Diagnosis and Management of Foodborne Illnesses](#) kit, available at no cost by emailing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) at [CFSANPublicationRe@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:CFSANPublicationRe@fda.hhs.gov) and requesting publication HP 02.

