



FOODBORNE ILLNESS

Benton County Health Department Public Health Data Brief Series: Issue 1

Introduction and Background

With bountiful farmers’ markets, healthy grocery stores, excellent restaurants, and talented home cooks, Benton County residents have many opportunities to enjoy the healthful and social act of sharing a meal. However, wherever there is food, there is also the small potential for foodborne illness. A foodborne illness is usually caused by a pathogen like bacteria, a virus, or a parasite, that has contaminated food or drink. In the first edition of the Benton County Health Department Public Health Brief Series, we will analyze recent data on foodborne illness and food safety in Benton County. In addition, we will offer some advice on how to prevent foodborne illness.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified 31 pathogens that cause foodborne illness. These include norovirus, *Salmonella*, and *E. Coli*, among others. Foodborne toxins or chemicals are another source of foodborne illness. Most people who contract a foodborne illness experience mild symptoms like vomiting and diarrhea. About 48 million people contract a foodborne illness in the U.S. each year; 128,000 people are hospitalized; and 3,000 people die from complications.

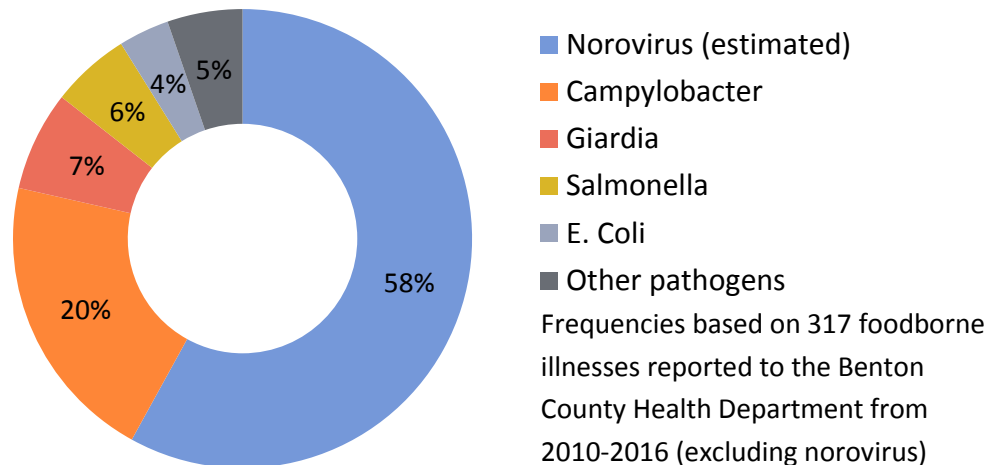
Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

At left: *E. Coli* bacteria (top) and norovirus capsid (bottom)

Based on national estimates, 1 out of 6 Benton County residents, or 15,000 people, will contract a foodborne illness in 2016, and 40 will be hospitalized. Norovirus causes the majority of illnesses, followed by *Campylobacter*, found in contaminated poultry. Over 99 percent of illnesses go unreported to health authorities.

Local Data

Relative frequency of pathogens in reported foodborne illnesses in Benton County, 2010-2016



Data from Oregon Public Health Division and the CDC

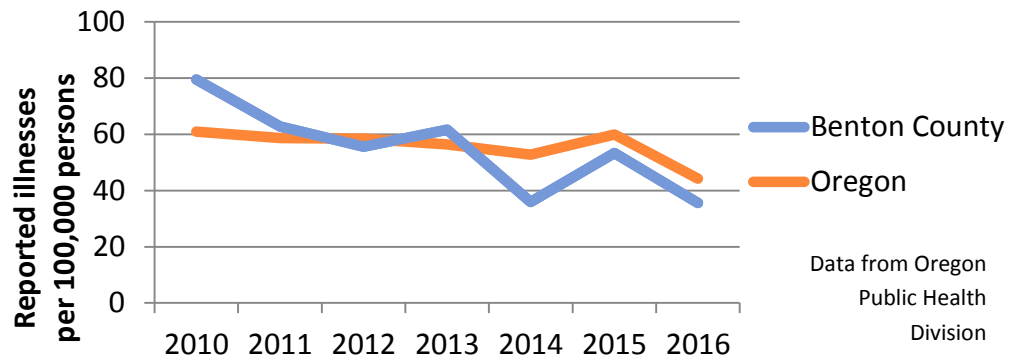


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The annual rate of reported foodborne illnesses in Benton County is similar to the state of Oregon. Both rates have been declining over time, but Benton County's rate has been decreasing faster. Benton County's rate is less than half of what it was six years ago (excluding norovirus).

Annual Trends

Annual reported foodborne illness rates in Benton County and Oregon, excluding norovirus



Benton County Health Department

- Benton County Health Department (BCHD) licenses all 294 temporary and permanent restaurants in the county
- In 2014, BCHD conducted 546 regular inspections. 141 food facilities passed all food safety inspections with no violations
- In 2014, BCHD trained 27 managers in proper food safety and issued 1,927 food handler cards
- BCHD partners with restaurant operators and county residents who advise the Board of Commissioners on food safety
- BCHD investigates all reported individual cases and outbreaks of foodborne illness in the county

Food Safety at Home

- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before preparing food
- Keep food stored at proper temperatures and cook food to the proper internal temperature
- Avoid cross-contamination of food and cooking tools like knives and cutting boards
- Contact your health care provider if you think you have a foodborne illness
- Inform BCHD if you have concerns about food safety at a restaurant or other food facility
- Visit the websites or reach out to the contacts below for more information

Additional resources and citations: <https://www.co.benton.or.us/health/page/environmental-health>; <https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/FoodSafety/Pages/index.aspx>; <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/foodborne-germs.html>; BCHD inspections data from Benton County Environmental Health; images from <http://ed.ted.com/on/cBw3kyhd>, <http://www.pnas.org/content/105/27/9175.full.pdf>, and <http://www.keyword-suggestions.com/ZnJlc2ggZm9vZA/>

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