

FACT SHEET

Bacillus

Common clinical features

Some cases have a sudden onset of nausea and vomiting and others have colicky pain and diarrhoea. The illness generally lasts for no longer than one day.

Incubation period

B. cereus – emetic syndrome: 1 – 5 hours; diarrhoeal syndrome: 8 to 16 hours

B. subtilis – 10 minutes to 4 hours

B. licheniformis – 2 to 14 hours

Where is it found?

Widespread in the environment: soil, dust, vegetation. A variety of food products can be contaminated. There are no human or animal sources.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

From contaminated foods subjected to inadequate post-cooking temperature control during cooling and storage. A wide variety of food products can act as sources but *B. cereus* is particularly associated with rice dishes. It is not passed from person-to-person.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

The bacteria are cultured from faeces and suspected foods, and the results are usually available in 2 to 3 days. This test will only be carried out if food poisoning with Bacillus is strongly suspected.

How is it treated?

Symptomatic treatment only.