estimates that each year 48 million people get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 people die from foodborne illness. Symptoms of foodborne illness can include fever, chills, headache, diarrhea, abdominal pain and vomiting.

Foodborne pathogens are sneaky. You cannot always detect them by looking at or tasting food. When it comes to food safety, separate fact from fiction.

**MYTH:** The food that made someone sick is the most recent thing eaten.

**FACT:** Not necessarily. The bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph) will make you sick in about one to six hours after infection. *Noroviruses* (viruses which cause vomiting and diarrhea) will cause symptoms in about 12 to 48 hours. *E. coli* and *salmonella* are bacteria

You spent hours on the turkey, mastered your first homemade gravy, and successfully kept the pie crust from burning. Your holiday meal will be delicious! By taking a few extra steps, the only discomfort afterwards will be from full stomachs.

Improperly prepared, cooked, or stored food can contain foodborne pathogens: disease-causing bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites that can make you sick. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

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**Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:**

Beware the winter months

Winter is coming...and bringing risks of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. More people die from accidental CO poisoning during the winter months than any other time of year. This is largely due to people using portable power generators unsafely.

CO is a poisonous gas formed when you burn any fossil fuel. It is a sneaky poison because it has no smell and no color, so people may not be aware that they are

Federal law states that real (a.k.a. pure) vanilla extract must have at least 100 grams of vanilla beans per liter and be at least _____ percent alcohol.

A. 10%
B. 20%
C. 35%

Answer: page 4
breathing it. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 50,000 people in the U.S. visit an emergency department each year— and at least 430 people die— from accidental CO poisoning. Symptoms of CO poisoning are often mistaken for the flu or other illness, and include:

- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Chest pain
- Feeling tired, weak, or dizzy
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness (“passing out”)

Very high concentrations of CO can cause loss of consciousness and even death in only a few breaths. A person who survives CO poisoning may suffer permanent damage to the brain or other organs.

The number one source of CO poisoning is portable power generators. Other common sources include oil or gas furnaces, kerosene or propane heaters, automobile engines, woodstoves, open fires, gasoline powered tools, and charcoal or gas grills.

Protect your family:

- Never run a portable generator in an enclosed space, such as in a basement, attic, storage shed, or garage. The minimum safe distance for a generator is at least 25 feet from your home.
- Make sure you have CO detectors installed in your home. Replace the batteries routinely just like you do with your smoke detectors.
- Have all chimneys professionally cleaned each year. Oil and gas burning furnaces should also be checked by a professional once a year.
- Do not heat your home with a gas-powered oven or stove.
- Do not run your car engine in the garage, even with the garage door open.
- Make sure the tailpipe of your car is not blocked, especially by snow or leaves. A blocked tailpipe causes CO gas produced by the engine to build up quickly inside the car.

If you suspect someone may be suffering from CO poisoning, get them to fresh air immediately. Then call 9-1-1.

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**News and Notes**

**Reverse the stigma.** Substance use disorder is a disease, not a moral failing. Like all diseases, it can be treated. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) just launched this online tool to help connect people suffering from addiction and other substance use issues to the right treatment options. Treatment saves lives, saves families, and saves communities. Visit [https://findtreatment.gov/](https://findtreatment.gov/).

**Lung injuries associated with vaping: AN UPDATE.** As of November 5th, 2019, there have been 72 reported cases, including one reported death, associated with this outbreak in Virginia. National numbers are higher. Health officials have now identified a link to vape liquid that contains vitamin E acetate. This chemical is used as an additive in the production of some e-cigarette, or vaping, products. All injured lung tissue samples from victims have been found to contain vitamin E acetate. More information can be found here: [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/severe-lung-disease.html).

**Need help quitting e-cigarettes or vapes?** These evidence-based programs can help.

- From the Truth Initiative: text "DITCHJUUL" to 88709.
- From the National Cancer Institute: [www.teen.smokefree.gov](http://www.teen.smokefree.gov) (for teens).
- From the VA Dept. of Health: Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit [QuitNow.net/Virginia](http://QuitNow.net/Virginia).
which can take several days to cause symptoms. *Cyclospora* is a one-celled parasite that may take up to a week to cause symptoms. *Listeria* is bacteria which may take as many as 1-4 weeks after infection to cause symptoms.

**MYTH:** If I peel my fruits or vegetables, I don’t have to worry about getting sick.
**FACT:** Harmful bacteria that live on the skins or rinds of produce can easily infect the insides while being removed. To be safe, wash the outside of produce BEFORE you peel it or cut off the rind.

**MYTH:** If the ‘use by’ or expiration date is still good, I don’t have to worry about getting sick.
**FACT:** Not necessarily true. Here’s what those label dates really mean:

- **Best If Used By/Before** — This guarantees when a product is of the best quality. It’s not about safety. After this date, a product might still be safe to eat although it might have lost some of its flavor or nutrients.

- **Expiration or Sell By date** — This is the date set by manufacturers to tell retailers when to remove a product from shelves and the public not to consume it. The date is the limit of time a product can be guaranteed safe as long as it has been stored and handled properly. Beware of eating products beyond this date. However, food that has not reached its ‘sell by’ or ‘expiration’ date is not automatically safe. If the packaging has been opened, or it has been stored improperly, it can become infected with pathogens and spoil sooner.

**MYTH:** If food is spoiled, it will smell or taste bad.
**FACT:** Although a bad smell, an unpleasant or “off” taste, or any unusual appearance may be signs that food is unsafe to eat, these signs may not always be present. 
**When in doubt, throw it out.**

Here’s some good news. Foodborne illness is preventable! There are four basic steps to keeping your food safe: **Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.**

**Clean:** Wash hands with soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets. Wash cutting boards, countertops, and utensils after they touch raw animal products (meat, poultry, eggs, or seafood). Wash fruits and vegetables even if you plan to peel them.

**Separate:** Separate raw animal products from other foods in your grocery bags and refrigerator. Don’t reuse marinades that touched raw animal products, unless you boil them first. Consider having a separate cutting board for raw animal products.

**Cook:** Always heat food to the correct internal temperature. See the chart above from the U.S. FDA for guidance. Use a food thermometer to be sure. Keep food hot (at least 140 degrees F) after cooking and before eating.

**Chill:** Keep your refrigerator at least 40 degrees F. Refrigerate or freeze food within 2 hours of cooking or purchasing.

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Prepare with Care: Don’t let food poisoning spoil your holidays. continued from pg. 1

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continued page 4
Although most cases of food poisoning will resolve on their own, some may be serious. If the sick person is a young child, a senior adult, has other health issues, or has any of the following symptoms, seek care from a medical provider:

- Blood in the stool.
- A fever higher than 102 degrees F.
- Vomiting or diarrhea for more than a couple of days.
- Any signs of dehydration including dry mouth, dizziness, and little or no urination.

If you think you or someone you know got sick from food, even if you don’t know what food it was, please report it to your local health department. Reporting an illness can help public health officials identify a foodborne disease outbreak and keep others from getting sick.

For more tips to keep that most unwelcome holiday guest – foodborne illness – from messing up your perfect holiday meal, visit www.foodsafety.gov.

WEBINAR:

Tools to Assist Schools Navigate the Vaping Epidemic

Hosted by the Public Health Law Center and American Lung Association

This webinar took place on November 13, 2019. The recording can be viewed here: https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/webinar/tools-assist-schools-navigate-vaping-epidemic

About the webinar: Communities are at the front line of navigating the rise in youth use of e-cigarettes. This webinar will describe the trends in youth use of Juul and other e-cigarette products, the public health harms of e-cigarette use, and the unique role schools play in addressing the epidemic. The Public Health Law Center will present the highlights of a model policy for K-12 schools. The American Lung Association will provide an overview of its INDEPTH program – a new, convenient alternative to suspension or citation that helps schools and communities address the teen vaping problem in a more supportive way.

Poison Trivia Answer: C. The FDA states that pure vanilla extract must be at least 35% alcohol. This is 70 proof--the same as many liquors like vodka, rum, and tequila. (The alcohol evaporates during the cooking process.)

Despite the high alcohol content, baking extracts are exempt from regulations about alcoholic beverages, mainly because they are considered ‘non-potable.’ In other words they taste really bad on their own. However, this does not necessarily deter young children from drinking them and could lead to a dangerous intoxication.

Keep all baking extracts out of the sight and reach of young children.

Happy Holidays from the Blue Ridge Poison Center!

We’re always open: 1-800-222-1222