

Diet, Nutrition and the Context of Risk (Part 2): Food Poisoning

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Other than the morbidity and mortality linked to eating too much food, "all-natural" organisms that contaminate our food cause more illness, more hospitalizations and more death than food contaminated by heavy metals, plastics, preservatives, artificial colors, emulsifiers, artificial sweeteners and pesticides combined. In fact, the numbers are staggering (see Table 1) and yet for some reason, food poisoning does not seem to resonate compared to more innocuous or esoteric threats.

For example, when I lecture on the topic, the possibility that [GMO crops](#) might cause widespread illness someday (they haven't yet) generates much more passion than the widespread illness caused every year by contaminated food. After reading quite a bit about it, I believe part of the problem is many people don't recognize food poisoning when they have it, since the CDC estimates one of every six Americans contracts it every year. In other words, people know they're sick when symptoms such as an upset stomach, abdominal cramps, nausea, diarrhea and vomiting are present. The problem is they call it the stomach flu or the 24-hour flu - two ailments that technically don't exist (see below) - when in fact, they probably have food poisoning.