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NF94-157 *Bacillus cereus*

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Bacillus cereus

*By Susan S. Sumner, Extension Food Microbiologist
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- The Disease:** *Bacillus cereus* can cause two distinct types of illnesses: 1) a diarrheal illness with an incubation time of approximately four to 16 hours, and 2) an emetic (vomiting) illness with an incubation time of one to five hours.
- The Organism:** *Bacillus cereus* is an aerobic (needs oxygen to grow) spore forming bacteria.
- Sources:** *Bacillus cereus* is widely distributed in nature and in foods. It is commonly found in soil, milk, cereals, starches, herbs, spices, and other dried food stuffs. Foods most often implicated in outbreaks include meat pies, fried rice and puddings.
- Control:** Since *Bacillus cereus* bacteria are common and widespread, preventing contamination of food with spores is virtually impossible. Consequently, effective prevention and control measures depend on inhibiting spore germination and preventing the growth of vegetative cells in cooked, ready-to-eat foods. Freshly cooked food eaten hot, immediately after cooking is safe. Steaming under pressure, thorough roasting, frying and grilling are most likely to destroy cell and spores. Temperatures under 212°F will allow for the survival of some *Bacillus* spores.
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