



Safe Food for a Healthy Life

An Initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts at Georgetown University

Cost of Foodborne Illness

In addition to sickness, discomfort, and death, foodborne illnesses carry with them significant economic and social costs that extend far beyond the immediate victim.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that foodborne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the United States each year.¹
- For every foodborne illness case that is reported, as many as 40 more illnesses are not reported or lab-confirmed.²
- More than 30 million people in the United States are likely to be particularly susceptible to foodborne disease. Very young, elderly, and immune-compromised persons experience the most serious foodborne illnesses.³
- It is estimated that chronic, secondary complications resulting from foodborne illness occur in 2-3 percent of cases.⁴
- The Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates the annual costs of medical care, productivity losses, and premature deaths due to foodborne illnesses caused by the five major pathogens to be \$6.9 billion.⁵

¹HHS, CDC, *Food Safety Office*, (2008), available from <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>.

²This multiplier reflects the estimates developed by a number of different sources. Andrew C. Voetsch et al., "FoodNet Estimate of the Burden of Illness Caused by Nontyphoidal Salmonella Infections in the United States." *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 38, no. Suppl 3 (2004): S127-S134, <http://www.cdc.gov/enterics/publications/280-voetscha1.pdf>; P Mead et al., Food-related illness and death in the United States, *Emerg Infect Dis* 1999; 5607-25 (multiplier of 38); and RB Chalker and MJ Blaser. A review of human salmonellosis. III. Magnitude of Salmonella Infection in the United States. *Rev Infect Dis* 1988;10:111-24.

³Council for Agricultural Science and Technology. "Foodborne Pathogens: Risks and Consequences." Task Force Report No. 122, (1994).

⁴Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, (1994).

⁵S.R. Crutchfield, T. Roberts, "Food Safety Efforts Accelerate in the 1990s." *23 FoodReview* 44: 49 (2000).