

# 1 in 6 Americans sickened by food each year

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About one in six Americans, or 48 million people, get sick from tainted food each year, according to new figures that US officials said Wednesday provide the best data yet on foodborne pathogens.

"We've made progress in better understanding the burden of foodborne illness and unfortunately, far too many people continue to get sick from the [food](#) they eat," Thomas Frieden, director of the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which released the figures.

"These estimates provide valuable information to help CDC and its partners set priorities and further reduce illnesses from food," he said.

Each year, according to the new data methods -- CDC's first move to estimate illness caused specifically by food eaten in the [United States](#) -- some 128,000 people are hospitalized from foodborne disease, and 3,000 people die from the illnesses, said a report published in the journal [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#).

The last attempt at comprehensive estimates were made in 1999, and the report Wednesday found much lower figures of sickness largely due to improved data gathering methods.

But worryingly for health authorities, the CDC's estimates found that only 9.4 million of the 48 million annual illnesses were due to known foodborne pathogens -- about 80 percent of the illnesses "result from unspecified agents."

This category includes "known agents without enough data to make specific estimates, agents not yet recognized as causing foodborne illness, and agents not yet discovered," said the CDC in a statement.

[Salmonella](#) was the leading cause of estimated hospitalizations and deaths, said the CDC, with it responsible for some 28 percent of the deaths and 35 percent of hospitalizations.

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