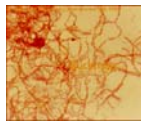
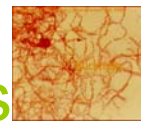


New Mexico Environment Department Presents:

Food Safety



Bacillus cereus



What is *Bacillus cereus*? Chances are, you have never heard of this unless you like to play with microscopes. But, you may have been exposed to this bacterium at sometime in your life.

This organism has been associated with rice dishes but other starchy items like potatoes, pasta, and cheeses may be found to contain amounts of this bacterium. You still have to consider that bean sprouts, onions, fried zucchini, cucumbers, cabbages, salads, fish, milk, meats, and ginger salad dressing have also been implicated as having been contaminated with *B. cereus*.

The symptoms associated with this bacterium are diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and pain, which usually occur 6-16 hours after consumption. After onset, the symptoms may last up to 24 hours. Complications do exist for this bacterium, so avoiding contact is your best bet. Unfortunately, a number of other bacteria have similar symptoms so you would need a physician to determine if you have this one.



If we look at the New Mexico Food Service and Food Processing Regulations, we can find that the same requirements that have been spoken of in previous Tips to avoid bacteria will help you in avoiding this one. Most importantly is to know where your food is coming from at all times. If you follow these additional guidelines, you will increase your chances of a safe product:

1. Avoid buying food items from people selling foods out of the back of trucks unless they can provide a very well documented product.
2. Keep leftovers to a minimum.

Will this stop all bacteria? No, but you will be increasing your ability to have a safe product.

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