



**Together: A Food Safe America**

## The Extent of Foodborne Illness in America

According to the best available estimates by public health and food safety experts, millions of illnesses and thousands of deaths each year in this country can be traced to contaminated food. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that foodborne microorganisms cause 48 million illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.

Not only can you get sick from foodborne pathogens, the Food and Drug Administration estimates that two to three percent of all foodborne illnesses lead to serious secondary long-term illnesses. For example, hemolytic uremic syndrome, the main cause of kidney failure in children, is caused by infection with *E. coli* O157:H7 (CDC); reactive arthritis (RA) occurs in approximately eight percent of foodborne illness cases, and it is associated with many different foodborne pathogens including *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* (Buzby & Roberts, 2009); irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) has been associated with various food-related gastrointestinal infections including *Norovirus* and various bacterial illnesses (Spiller & Garsed, 2009); fetal loss, meningitis, and sepsis have all been linked to *Listeria* (CDC); and individuals infected with *Campylobacter* are at a 77-fold greater risk of developing the Guillian-Barre syndrome than the general population (Tam *et al.*, 2006).

The foodborne pathogens known to cause the most number of illnesses as recognized by the CDC are *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Norovirus*. Only a small proportion of infected people are tested and diagnosed, with as few as 2 percent of cases reported to CDC.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that over 1 million people in the United States are infected each year with *Salmonella*. According to the CDC, *Campylobacter* is the most common bacterial cause of diarrhea in the United States, resulting in 845,024 cases per year. Since 1982, *E. coli* O157:H7 has emerged as an important cause of foodborne illness. The CDC estimates this pathogen causes approximately 2,138 hospitalizations in the United States each year. According to 2009 preliminary CDC data, rates of infection were at least 25% lower for *Shigella*, *Yersinia*, *Campylobacter*, and *Listeria* than they were a decade ago.