

# HYGIENE AWARENESS INSTRUCTION

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF HYGIENE

Poor standards of food hygiene can cause serious illness and may result in court action and closure of a business. It is important that food is sold from premises which are clean and by people who know how to handle food safely.

To help you do this, the following notes will explain what can cause food poisoning and how to prevent it.

Remember that you have a responsibility to handle food correctly so that it is safe for customers to eat.

## FOOD POISONING

Food poisoning is an illness caused by eating contaminated food. Food can be contaminated by:

- bacteria
- viruses
- mould
- physical objects (metals, glass, plastic etc.)
- chemicals

Natural poisons may also be present in fish and plants.

The most common food poisoning symptoms include diarrhoea, abdominal pain, vomiting and nausea. Symptoms usually start between 1 - 36 hours and can last for a few days.

Bacteria may already be present in or on food, especially raw food. Food might also become contaminated from one of the above sources. This is particularly important for food which is cooked or ready-to-eat.

Bacteria need food, warmth, moisture and time to grow. They will grow quickly at temperatures in the 'danger zone' - **between 8°C and 63°C**. It is therefore important that food is not left in a warm place for too long.

Bacteria may survive cooking if this is not carried out properly.

To help avoid food poisoning you must:

- buy food from a good supplier
- avoid contamination of food
- control the temperature of food during delivery, storage, preparation, cooking and service

## **CROSS-CONTAMINATION**

Cross-contamination occurs when harmful bacteria are passed onto food which is cooked or ready to eat.

Bacteria can be passed from various sources:

- **raw food:** meat, poultry, fish, eggs and vegetables
- **equipment:** particularly equipment used for raw food, such as chopping boards and knives
- **cloths:** particularly cloths used for wiping surfaces on which raw food has been placed
- **people:** germs are found on hair, nose, skin, cuts, grazes, and on clothing
- **pests:** flies, mice, rats and cockroaches
- **refuse:** bacteria on rotting food, transmitted by rodents, flies, cockroaches etc.

Cross-contamination can be avoided by following these simple steps:

- keep raw foods apart from food which is cooked or ready to eat
- use separate equipment and work surfaces for raw and cooked food and disinfect after use
- use separate cloths for raw food areas and disinfect after use (disposable colour-coded cloths are recommended)

- food handlers must wash their hands after using the toilet and after handling raw food and waste materials
- cover food placed on display
- cover cuts and grazes
- keep premises pest-free and store food in covered pest-proof containers

## FOOD STORAGE

Food must be stored correctly to avoid contamination by bacteria, viruses, pests, foreign materials and chemicals. Checking date codes and stock rotation is important to avoid using food which is stale or unsafe to eat. Good stock rotation means that food should be used on the basis of "First in, First out". Care should be taken not to simply top up containers.

Food must be stored at the correct temperature to avoid spoilage and bacterial growth.

Storage requirements will vary depending on whether the food is fresh or processed and on how it is packaged, such as canned, chilled or frozen.

Food may be stored

- at room temperature
- in a refrigerator
- in a freezer

as follows:

### Room temperature

Dry foods, such as flour and rice, should be stored in rooms which are clean, dry and well ventilated. Food should be kept off the floor and placed in covered containers. Fruit and vegetables should be kept in a cool room and stored off the floor. They should be stored away from food which is cooked or ready to eat to avoid contamination from soil and bacteria.

### Refrigerators

Bacteria will grow readily in foods, such as meat, poultry, fish and dairy products. These foods must be kept cold and should be stored at a temperature of not more than 8°C. Fridges must not be over-stocked to allow cold air to circulate. The temperature of fridges should be checked twice daily and they should be serviced regularly.

Separate fridges should be used for storing raw and cooked food. If the same fridge is used, raw food must be stored on the bottom shelf to avoid contaminating food which is cooked or ready to eat. All food should be covered and fridges must be kept clean.

Refrigeration will not stop bacteria growing and food should only be stored for short periods.

### Freezers

Frozen food will keep for longer periods as bacteria will not grow at very cold temperatures. Freezing, however, does not kill bacteria. Freezers should operate at a temperature of at least -18°C.

Freezers will have a star rating to indicate how long food can safely be stored:

- \* 1 week
- \*\* 1 month
- \*\*\* 3 months
- \*\*\*\* 3 months or longer. Capable of freezing fresh foods

Frozen food should be placed in the freezer as soon as it is delivered. Date codes should be checked regularly and stock rotated. Fresh food which you freeze on your premises should be date-coded by you to make sure that it is used within a satisfactory time period. Storage times will vary depending on the type of food and on your particular freezer.

Freezers should be defrosted and cleaned on a regular basis.

### PERSONAL HYGIENE

Food handlers must have high standards of personal hygiene to protect food and help make sure that it is safe to eat.

People can spread bacteria and viruses onto food. Bacteria can be found on:

- hands
- hair
- mouth, nose, ears
- skin
- spots, cuts, grazes

Viruses can be spread by vomiting, sneezing or poor hygiene (not washing hands after using the toilet)

Food can also be contaminated by hair, jewellery, nail varnish, buttons and fabric from clothing.

You can protect food by:

- Washing hands often and always after
  - visiting the toilet
  - touching your face, especially your nose, mouth and ears
  - handling raw food
  - handling rubbish
  - cleaning
  - breaks away from the workplace
- Using clean towels to dry hands. Towels used by others should be avoided due to the risk of spreading germs. Disposable paper towels are recommended.
- Keeping cuts and grazes covered, and not touching spots.
- Tying long hair back and covering hair with a suitable head covering.
- Avoiding wearing jewellery particularly rings and ear-rings with stones and jewels.
- Keeping nails short and clean. Nail varnish must not be worn.

Food handlers are required by law to report certain illnesses or conditions to the proprietor of the food business. If you are suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting, or if you have any infected skin wounds, you must tell the proprietor. You may be asked to leave work until you are well or you may be given another job which does not involve handling food or working in an area where food is stored. If your symptoms last for more than 24 hours, you should visit your doctor.

Your employer may ask you to complete a questionnaire about your health. If you have been ill, it is important that you follow the correct procedures to avoid the risk of spreading infection.

## **CLEANING AND DISINFECTION**

Food premises must be kept clean and tidy and it is important that equipment and surfaces are disinfected regularly. Cleaning needs to be effective. Hot water and detergent will help dissolve grease and dirt.

Disinfection will reduce bacteria to a safe level. This can be done by using very hot water, at about 82°C, or by using a suitable disinfectant. Disinfectants should be left in contact with surfaces for the length of time recommended on the instructions. Equipment and areas which require disinfection include

utensils, chopping boards, containers and work surfaces and hand contact surfaces, such as fridge handles.

Cleaning and disinfection should be carried out in the following stages:

1. *pre-clean* to remove food residue
2. *main clean* with hot water and detergent
3. *rinse* to remove traces of detergent
4. *disinfection* to reduce bacteria
5. *final rinse* to remove traces of disinfectant
6. *drying* with disposable cloths or air drying

Disinfectants on their own will not kill germs on surfaces which are not physically clean.

A sanitiser is able to clean and disinfect. It is a chemical which contains a detergent and disinfectant and therefore combines stages 2,3 and 4.

Chemicals must be stored away from food and be kept in labelled containers. Always follow safety instructions.

## **FOREIGN OBJECT CONTAMINATION**

Foreign bodies may be brought into the premises with raw materials or introduced during storage, preparation or display. Some may be unpleasant, such as hair and paper, whilst others may be harmful, such as glass and metal.

Examples of other foreign bodies which may be found in food include:

- nuts and bolts
- staples and plastic
- paint and rust
- insects and stones
- rodent droppings

Food must be bought from a good supplier and be stored in clean, covered containers. Fruit and vegetables must be thoroughly washed before use. Glass should be avoided where possible and equipment kept in good repair. The premises must be kept clean and free from pests.

## WASTE DISPOSAL

Effective waste disposal is important to protect food and to avoid attracting pests.

Waste bins should be easy to clean and disinfect and should have a close-fitting lid. Waste may be placed in polythene bags and removed when full or at the end of each day. Stands for these bags must be kept clean. Pedal operated bins are recommended to avoid touching lids.

The bags should be tied and stored outside the premises in a large bin or secure compound to prevent damage by dogs, cats and pests. The waste compound must be capable of being cleaned and should be washed down regularly. Waste bins should not be situated too close to windows and doors to encourage flies to enter food rooms.

## PEST CONTROL

Food pests spread bacteria and spoil food. They include rats, mice, flies, birds and insects. Food premises are attractive to pests because they provide a source of food in addition to warmth and shelter.

Signs of pests include:

- live or dead rodents, insects, etc.
- droppings
- eggs/larvae (grubs)
- smell/noise
- damage to food/packaging/property

You can help prevent pests by good housekeeping:

- keep premises pest-proof (e.g. self-closing external doors and fly-screens on windows opened for ventilation)
- remove food spillages and waste
- keep premises clean and tidy
- store food in pest-proof containers
- rotate stock
- carry out checks for any evidence of pest activity

## CONTROLLING FOOD SAFETY - HAZARD ANALYSIS

The proprietor of a food business has to identify where hazards might occur in the food business. These hazards could be contamination of food with bacteria, foreign bodies or chemicals.

The proprietor then has to go through the operation step by step and decide what controls have to be introduced to avoid causing harm to customers. These controls have to be checked to make sure they are working.

Examples of controls are:

- storing food at the right temperature
- cooking food thoroughly
- avoiding cross-contamination during preparation

Examples of checks are:

- taking temperature of fridges
- taking temperature of cooked food
- making sure separate chopping boards and knives are used for raw and cooked food

If the checks show that something is wrong, corrective action must be taken, that is, you must do something to deal with the problem.

Examples are:

- changing the temperature of the fridge
- cooking food for longer
- discarding food which may have been contaminated

You will play an important part in controlling food safety by following procedures in your workplace. Always remember to protect food from contamination, look out for hazards and follow the basic rules of temperature control. You should also report anything which could cause a problem for food safety. By acting responsibly, you can help avoid legal action and prevent customers from becoming ill or being injured. You can also help your business achieve a good reputation. Safe food is everyone's responsibility.

Further information on food safety/hygiene can be found at [www.nbbcfood.info](http://www.nbbcfood.info)