

BUSINESS BENEFITS

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Food businesses that have used ATP monitors have identified the following benefits:

- Better control over cleaning procedures – leading to lower levels of micro-organisms in the finished product, improved quality and a lower risk of food product incidents associated with food safety
- Improvements in motivation of cleaning staff, leading to improved hygiene standards
- Its use as an important tool to refine and improve cleaning procedures, optimising the use of chemicals and water. Savings of up to 25% have been suggested.
- Better identification of the training needs of cleaning staff
- Used to identify and eliminate cleaning trouble spots

We hope that by utilising an ATP monitor as part of the inspection of your premises it may lead to you gaining some, if not all, of the benefits listed above.

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ATP RAPID HYGIENE ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

As part of the food hygiene inspection of your premises the Inspector has used a piece of equipment known as an ATP Bioluminescence Rapid Hygiene Monitor. The monitor is used to assess the effectiveness of cleaning. This leaflet is intended to explain the basic principle behind the use of such a monitor and to give you details of the results obtained. The general information in the leaflet may also be supplemented by specific advice from the Inspector on cleaning and disinfection in your premises.



FOOD SAFETY

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To minimise the risk of contamination of food products it is essential that food premises and food-related equipment are thoroughly and effectively cleaned before food preparation commences. In order for food preparation areas to be deemed to be clean, the level of micro-organisms (germs) must be low and food residues removed. Food residues remaining on a surface after ineffective cleaning provides a source of nutrients for the growth of micro-organisms and can even protect such germs from the action of disinfectants. Such an outcome, if undetected, may affect food quality and safety.

Visual inspection of equipment and surfaces can only tell you so much; you are likely to be able to detect gross soiling (significant residues) but visual checks may not reveal smaller amounts of food residues and will certainly not reveal contamination by bacteria, which can only be seen with the aid of a microscope.



ATP BIOLUMINESCENCE EXPLAINED

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The ATP bioluminescence technique makes use of the fact that all living cells contain the substance adenosine triphosphate (ATP). ATP is a substance that is present in all animal and vegetable matter, including most food and food debris/residues, bacteria, fungi and other micro-organisms. Levels of ATP can therefore be used to indicate the amount of such matter on (food contact) surfaces and give a measure of their cleanliness and the effectiveness of cleaning procedures. In essence, therefore, an ATP monitor assesses the hygiene status of the surfaces being tested.

The ATP bioluminescence technique involves taking a sample of the ATP present on the surface by swabbing. The swab is then exposed to an extractant that releases the ATP from all microbial cells present on the swab. The ATP is then detected by a chemical reaction that produces light, the amount of light given out being directly proportional to the amount of ATP present in the swab sample taken. The ATP monitor accurately measures the amount of light produced and gives a reading in Relative Light Units (RLUs).

Scientific studies have shown a high correlation (in the region of 70%) between the pass/fail results obtained by bioluminescence techniques and those obtained by more traditional microbiological methods. However, although there are a number of advantages in using the ATP monitor to assess cleanliness, **it must be stated that the method is only used as an indicator rather than a guarantor of hygiene**, due to variations in surface finishes, food business type and characteristics of particular foods.