
Food Hygiene Guide

Information Sheet

This information sheet is produced to reduce the risk of food poisoning to consumers by increasing the awareness of food store operators in the proper food hygiene procedures.

Microbiology

Preventative Measures

Keeping food for extended periods of time should be avoided.

To reduce bacterial growth:-

- Cold food should be kept at a temperature below 5°C and
- Hot food should be kept at a temperature above 60°C

Always wash hands after visiting the toilet or handling raw meats and vegetables.

Exclude all animals from preparation areas.

Personal Hygiene

Stopping Disease Transfer

Some important personal hygiene points that must be considered in food preparation are as follows.

- People with any infection on their fingers or hands or who are wearing absorbent bandages should not handle food.
- No person with any contagious or infectious diseases should handle food.

Methods to maintain Personal Hygiene

- (1) Hand washing and Drying.
Food handlers must always wash hands at the start of work, before and after handling of any foods, chemicals, equipment, visiting the toilet and any other item in the workplace.
- (2) Fingernails should be kept short and clean.
- (3) Jewellery should be removed as it prevents effective washing of hands and collects food particles that allows harbourage and growth of bacteria.
- (4) Taps at hand basins should be at wrist, elbow, knee or foot operated with both hot and cold water coming through a common outlet. Hands should be washed twice with soap up to the elbows for effective cleaning.
- (5) Hand drying is best accomplished with a disposable paper towels or a hot air dryer.
 - Re-usable hand towels can be a source of cross-contamination, their use is not recommended.
 - It is recommended not to use cloth towels in food preparation area as they may harbour bacteria.

Hand Habits

- Involuntary hand habits allow a means for bacteria to be transferred to food. Such habits include rubbing nose, eyes and mouth, scratching hair, nose, ears, armpits and other parts of the body. Hands should be washed after each of these habits.

Hair

- Hair should be clean, tidy and off the face. Long hair should be in a hair net or some form of clean cap or hat.

Uniforms

- Uniforms should be clean, light coloured, washable material and worn when handling food.
- Street clothes should not be worn as they may be contaminated by bacteria from the outside environment.
- These uniforms should be washed daily.

Smoking

- Smoking is not allowed in food preparation areas due to the risk of foreign bodies in the food (eg: ash), cross contamination and viral or bacterial infections being carried in the exhaled smoke.

Storage

Cold Stores

- Deep-freeze should be between -12°C and -15°C at all times.
- Bacteria are not killed by freezing.

Stock Rotation

- In any storage room, stock rotation is a very important process that must be performed almost daily. It saves money by using old stock before it reaches the expiry date and allows for continued cleaning and vermin control whilst stock is being moved around.

Preparation

Defrosting Food

- Defrosting of frozen food is best accomplished over a 24 hour period in a refrigerator or cold room at 5°C , rapidly in a microwave oven.

Handling

Hands and Food

- Handle food only when absolutely necessary, use tongs, ladles and spoons where possible.
- Disposable plastic gloves are the next safest method however these should be changed between handling different foods.

Raw and Cooked Foods

Storage

- Always separate raw food from cooked foods in freezers and cold-rooms
- Storage should be arranged so that juices from raw foods do not drip on and contaminate cooked food stored below.
- Food should not be stored on the floor.

Cross-contamination

- Cross-contamination can result from cutting boards, utensils and benches etc. eg. Placing cooked chicken on a cutting board after raw fish without any cleaning.
- Surfaces and utensils should be washed thoroughly, regularly and treated with hot water (greater than 75 °C).

Staff Behaviour

- Staff should not sit on benches or lean against equipment as there is potential for contamination from dirty clothing.

Animals

- No animals are allowed in food preparation and storage areas.

Guidelines for food handlers

- (a) Wash your hands with soap or detergent and wash immediately before commencing or resuming work and after visiting the toilet, smoking, handling a rubbish container, handkerchief or nasal tissue.
- (b) Keep clean your personal clothing, hands, fingernails and body at all times.
- (c) Wear clean protective clothing, to prevent food contamination at all times.
- (d) Wear clean hair covering
- (e) Do not spit or smoke.

- (f) Do not sit or lie on food preparation tables or benches.
- (g) Do not work if you are affected with a disease or are a carrier of a disease that may be transmitted by contamination of food.
- (h) Do not work in an area where contamination of food may occur if you have a boil, infected wound or sore, or a bandage or dressing that is not waterproof on any part of your body.
- (i) Do not use bare hands to handle prepared food – use tongs or clean disposable gloves. Bare hands may be used to handle raw foods subsequently cooked or cleaned before consumption.
- (j) Do not make unnecessary contact with food.
- (k) Do not wipe your hands on clothing or anything other than a clean towel.
- (l) Do not put your hands or fingers in your mouth, nose, hair, eyes, ears or other parts of your body.
- (m) Hold any tableware or utensil by its handle and do not carry it in your clothing.
- (n) Do not breathe into any package which is to be used for food and do not put your mouth on any food appliance.

Presentation of Food

Smorgasbords/Cold Buffets

- Essentially, all smorgasbord food should be handled as little as possible, given all reasonable protection and kept below 5°C.

Warming Trays and Hot Display Cabinets

- The temperature of the food displayed should always be kept above 60°C.
- The food warmers and displays should be brought to the required temperature before use. Do not use warmers for heating or re-heating but only for holding food that is already hot (above 60°C)

Cleaning

Objectives are to:

- a. Remove food and dirt particles that would provide ideal areas for bacterial growth ;
- b. Destroy bacteria present on equipment which could be a source of contamination for food;
- c. Remove food particles and dirt which could provide food and attraction for pests such as cockroaches and rats.

The basic rule is rule is draw up a regular daily cleaning schedule.

Vermin Control

The following groups are most often in food premises

- Flies: breed in filth and decaying matter. This, coupled with their bodily structure and eating habits, makes them a potential carrier of a number of food-borne infectious which are dangerous to health.
- Cockroaches: live closely with man and his food and are considered to be readily involved in cross contamination of food.
- Birds: potential carriers of Salmonella.
- Rats / Mice: potential carrier of number of food-borne infections, including Salmonella – as well as being destructive of food stock and physical premises.

Protection from Vermin

These are three methods of protecting food from contamination by vermin.

- A) Inspect incoming goods – inspect cartons of food including fruit and vegetables, preferably before placing in the preparation area. This will assist in preventing vermin from entering the food preparation area.
- B) Stock Rotation – (as mentioned in Section 4 – Storage) Vermin like dark, undisturbed areas. By rotating stock regularly and keeping the area clean vermin will be controlled.
- C) Routine inspection by a licensed pest control operator – the regular inspection and treatment by a licensed pest control operator will act as a support method for the previous two methods. If vermin are missed during inspection or hidden at time of stock rotation the treatment by a licensed pest control operator should assist in eliminating vermin from the food preparation area.

The best method of vermin control is incorporating all of the above methods into your routine.