

DO YOU HAVE AN EMPLOYEE HEALTH POLICY?

Food safety equals the prevention of foodborne illness. With that in mind, all food service establishments should have an Employee Health Policy in place. A good Employee Health Policy consists of three parts:

1. Employee training on foodborne illness, particularly symptoms and prevention of the Big Five. Employees should have basic knowledge of what is foodborne illness, what are the symptoms and how does an employee prevent the spread of foodborne illness.
2. Documentation that employees have been instructed of their responsibility to report to management their symptoms of, diagnosis of or exposure to foodborne illness. An employee is responsible for reducing the risk of spreading a foodborne illness in the food establishment. The employee should recognize symptoms and know what his responsibility is to management if he/she has foodborne illness symptoms. Use the Employee Illness Reporting Agreement to inform employees of their responsibility to prevent foodborne illness in a food establishment -
3. A management plan to restrict or exclude employees, as applicable, who have symptoms of, diagnosis of or exposure to foodborne illness. Management also has a responsibility in the Employee Health Policy. Employee training must be provided on points #1 and #2 above. Management must know what to do if an employee has symptoms of, or is diagnosed with, a foodborne illness. Use the Employee Health Guidelines to decide if an ill employee can come to work.

Employee Illness Reporting Agreement

You as a food service employee play a very important role in providing safe food to the general public. As a food handler, you have a responsibility to report the symptoms and conditions listed below.

I agree to report to the person in charge the following symptoms of foodborne illness:

1. Vomiting
2. Diarrhea
3. Jaundice-yellow skin or eye color
4. Sore throat with fever
5. Infected wounds

I agree to report to the person in charge if a doctor says that I have one of the following infections:

1. E.coli
2. Salmonella
3. Shigella
4. Hepatitis A
5. Norovirus

Note: The manager must report to the Pender County Health Department when an employee has one of these illnesses.

I agree to report to the person in charge if I am exposed to foodborne illness in the following ways:

1. I am exposed to a confirmed outbreak of foodborne illness.
2. Someone who lives in my house is diagnosed with a foodborne illness
3. Someone who lives in my house attends an event or works in a place which has a confirmed outbreak of foodborne illness.

Employee Acknowledgement

I understand that if I fail to meet the terms of this agreement, action could be taken by the food establishment or The Pender County Health Department that may affect my employment.

Employee name (please print): _____

Employee Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person in Charge: _____ Date: _____

Preventing Foodborne Diseases in Food Establishments.

Foodborne diseases are the illnesses contracted from eating contaminated food or beverages. Illnesses include foodborne intoxications and infections, which are often incorrectly referred to as food poisoning. There are more than 250 different foodborne diseases. They are caused by viruses, bacteria, parasites, toxins, metals, and prions. Symptoms of foodborne illness range from mild gastroenteritis to life-threatening neurologic, hepatic, and renal syndromes.

Health Department Regulators are present in food service establishments less than 1% of the time that they are in operation therefore, Food Service Establishment Managers and employees are the first line of defense when it comes preventing foodborne illness. The cycle of inspection and correction-re-inspection does not lead to a long-term solution for out of control foodborne illness risk factors and public health interventions. Systems need to be developed by establishment operators to do daily oversight of their operations to ensure that the foodborne illness risk factors identified are controlled.

This guide is to serve as an outline to establish food safety guidelines and procedures for your establishment.

The Big 5:

The Big 5 are a group of highly infectious foodborne pathogens that have a low infectious dose. They contaminate the gastrointestinal system after ingestion. An employee that is infected with a big 5 pathogen will typically shed hundreds of thousands of pathogens in their feces. These pathogens can easily be transmitted to food even when good hand washing practices are utilized. Consequently, the illness experienced by an infected consumer can be very severe. **The Big 5 are:**

E. Coli- A Gram-negative, facultatively anaerobic, rod-shaped bacterium that can produce a deadly toxin.

Sources: Meat, especially undercooked or raw hamburger, produce, and raw milk.

Incubation period: 3-4 days

Symptoms: Severe diarrhea, cramping, dehydration

Prevention: Cook implicated food to 155 degrees F, wash hands properly & frequently and correctly wash, rinse & sanitize utensils and dishware.

Shigella- A Gram-negative, facultative anaerobic, non-spore-forming, non-motile, rod-shaped bacteria. During infection, it typically causes dysentery. Shigella is one of the leading bacterial causes of diarrhea worldwide.

Sources: Salads, unclean water, milk and other dairy products.

Incubation period: 1-7 days

Symptoms: Diarrhea, fever, chills, dehydration

Prevention: Wash hands frequently and properly especially after using the restroom, wash vegetables thoroughly

Hepatitis A- A non-enveloped, positive-stranded RNA virus. It is an acute infectious disease of the liver.

Sources: Raw or undercooked shellfish from contaminated waters, raw produce, contaminated drinking water, uncooked foods and cooked foods that are not reheated properly after contact with an infected food handler.

Incubation period: 15-50 days

Symptoms: Jaundice, nausea, diarrhea, fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, cramps

Prevention: Wash hands frequently and properly, especially after using the restroom.

Salmonella- A non-spore-forming, predominantly motile, rod-shaped, Gram-negative bacteria. They can be divided into two groups—typhoidal and non-typhoidal.

Sources: Raw and undercooked eggs, undercooked poultry and meat, dairy products, seafood, fruits and vegetables.

Incubation period: 5-72 hours

Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, cramps, and fever

Prevention: Cook all food to proper temperatures, chill food rapidly, eliminate sources of cross contamination (i.e. proper meat storage, proper wash, rinse, and sanitize procedure).

Norovirus- A genus of genetically diverse single-stranded RNA, non-enveloped viruses. They are the most common cause of viral gastroenteritis in humans and affect people of all ages.

Sources: Oysters that are harvested from contaminated water, fruit and vegetables that are contaminated in the field, infected people who have infected stool or vomit on their hands and touch food products, counters or surfaces that have infectious stool or vomit on them, aerosols from an infected person that land on the food.

Incubation period: 6-48 hours

Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, cramps

Prevention: Wash hands frequently and properly, especially after using the restroom, obtain food from a reputable food source and wash vegetables thoroughly.

Food Employee Foodborne Illness Guidelines: Any food employee diagnosed with an illness due to the Big 5 must report the diagnosis to the Restaurant Manager. The food employee must be excluded from working in the food establishment and the law requires the manager to notify the local Health Department immediately. Before a food employee is allowed to return to work, check with the Pender County Health Department.

Illness symptoms action guidance:

<u>Symptoms</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Return to work criteria</u>	<u>Health Dept. approval</u>
Vomiting	Exclude from work	Symptom free for 24hrs. or Medical documentation stating symptoms are from a noninfectious condition	No, if not a Big 5
Diarrhea	Exclude from work	Symptom free for 24 hrs. or Medical Documentation stating symptoms are from a noninfectious condition	No, if not a Big 5
Jaundice	Exclude from work Notify Health Dept.	Medical documentation proving employee does not have Hepatitis A or other fecal-orally transmitted infection	Yes
Sore Throat With Fever	Restrict from food area of establishment	Medical documentation stating received antibiotic therapy for more than 24 hrs.	No
Infected Wound	Restrict from food area of establishment Cuts and sores must be covered with impermeable tight fitting bandage.	After skin, infected wound or pustule boil is properly covered	No

The Major Contributors to Foodborne Illness and Their Prevention:

1. Improper cooling or holding – Cooling food too slowly is a major cause of foodborne illness.

Prevention:

- A) Potentially hazardous foods, such as meats, seafood, poultry, and dairy products must be rapidly cooled from 140°F to 70°F within two hours, then from 70°F to 41°F within four hours.
 - B) Store food to be cooled in shallow pans no deeper than 3-4 inches
 - C) Cool container of food in an ice water bath of half water and half ice.
 - D) Stir the food often while cooling.
 - E) Refrigerate hot foods uncovered in shallow pans immediately. (Use a freezer to speed it up)
 - F) Do not place tight covers on foods during cooling.
 - G) Allow air circulation in the refrigerator.
 - H) Refrigerate canned foods prior to mixing it with other foods. (example: can of tuna)
 - I) Do not cool foods at room temperature longer than 30 minutes.
2. Contaminated raw foods or ingredients: Certain raw foods, such as meat, fish, poultry, shellfish, milk, and eggs may be contaminated with bacteria or viruses. These microorganisms can be spread during processing and preparation and can easily survive in the food if heating is inadequate.

Prevention:

- A) Buy foods from an approved source.
- B) Cook foods to the proper temperatures.
- C) Keep cold foods properly refrigerated (41 degrees f or below).
- D) Wash all raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- E) Avoid cross-contamination by using a separate cutting board/utensil for raw and cooked products unless they are sanitized between uses. Use a different cutting board for fruits, vegetables and breads than for meats.

3. Infected person handling foods: People with poor food handling habits and poor personnel hygiene are the biggest contributors to foodborne illness outbreaks.

Prevention:

- A) Do not handle food if you have colds, flu, diarrhea, or hepatitis.
 - B) Do not handle food if you have infected cuts, burns or lesions on the hands or lower arm.
 - C) Wash hands effectively during food handling.
 - D) Wash hands after eating, smoking, blowing nose, etc.
 - E) Do not wipe hands or utensils on apron or cloth towels.
 - F) Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.
 - G) Use utensils, deli paper, disposable gloves, etc. When handling ready to eat foods
 - H) Use hand sanitizers after washing hands.
4. Inadequate cooking or heating of food: All potentially hazardous foods must be cooked to a safe internal temperature before consumption.

Prevention:

- A) Cook poultry, stuffing and dressing at 165°F for at least 15 seconds.
- B) Cook ground beef and pork products to 155°F for at least 15 seconds.
- C) Cook beef cuts and other foods to at least 145°F.
- D) Do not rely on the color of the food, always use a food thermometer to check the temperature.

5/ Inadequate reheating: Reheating leftover and refrigerated foods to improper temperatures is also a major cause of foodborne illness. Many times this happens when foods are just "warmed up" rather than heated thoroughly.

Prevention:

Always reheat leftover refrigerated foods RAPIDLY to 165°F before serving or hot holding. If it is liquid, bring to a boil.

6/ Obtaining food from an unsafe source : All food received by a food establishment, must be from an approved source. Foods processed at private homes may not be offered for sale to the public.

7/ Time lapse between food preparation and consumption: Given sufficient time, bacteria in food can grow depending on the type of food, the temperature at which it is held and its moisture and acidity level. Foods that are prepared in advance of serving must be handled properly.

Prevention:

- A) Such foods must be properly cooked, cooled to proper temperatures and stored at 41°F or below. Do not forget to reheat all leftover food to 165°F rapidly.
- B) Have policies and procedures developed that outline the control of foodborne illness risk factors in your establishment.
- C) Train employees to follow developed procedures
- D) Verify that developed procedures are being followed

Routine Responsibilities for a Restaurant Manager:

1. Understand what causes foodborne illness. Ensure employees do not work or handle food when infected. Ensure employees practice good hand washing techniques. Ensure employees do not touch ready to eat food with their bare hands.
2. Ensure that there is at least one trained individual present at all times who can demonstrate the knowledge required in the Federal Food Code

3. Ensure that Policies and procedures are in place to prevent foodborne illness are developed and implemented by all staff. Make sure that all staff understand these policies and procedures and know where to find them.
4. In-house self-inspections of daily operations by the PIC are conducted on a regular basis to ensure that policies and procedures are followed.
5. Food preparation activities are followed and corrective action is taken, as needed, to protect the health of the consumer.
6. Hazards in the day-to-day operation of the food establishment are identified and corrected.

Tips to Keep Cross-Contamination from Causing a Foodborne Illness in Your Restaurant.

1. Demand critical hand washing practices, hand care, and correct glove use. Remind employees to wash their hands after touching anything that may have contaminated them. This is especially important after using the restroom and after handling raw meat, seafood, and poultry.
2. Make sure employees dry their hands properly with single use paper towels or hand dryers. Using a paper towel to avoid contact with faucet and door handles will also help minimize the spread of harmful viruses and bacteria.
3. Staff cleanliness and work attire should also be addressed.
4. Proper hair restraints should be worn.
5. Prohibit jewelry for food handlers.

6. Ensure food handlers come to work healthy. Employees must report any illnesses, cover any wounds, and avoid unsanitary habits.
7. Use separate equipment for each type of food being prepped and handled. For example: use one set of cutting boards, utensils and containers for raw poultry. Use another set for raw meat and use a third set for produce. Colored cutting boards and utensil handles can help keep equipment separate. If separate equipment cannot be used properly wash, rinse and sanitize equipment in between uses and prep food at different times. Make sure that you use a separate sanitizer bucket and wash cloth for raw meat prep stations. Color coded sanitizer buckets are recommended (red buckets for raw meat prep stations, green buckets for all other equipment.)
8. Clean and properly sanitize all work surfaces. All work surfaces, equipment, and utensils should washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each task. Simply rinsing equipment is not enough to get rid of pathogens that can contaminate food.
9. Purchase prepared food: You can prevent cross-contamination by purchasing food that doesn't require much prepping. This minimizes handling and can reduce the transfer of pathogens.