

FOOD TALK



SANITATION TIPS FOR FOOD WORKERS

SPRING 2011



Spring Tips for Staying Pest-Free

It's spring again! Warmer temperatures are on the way. And we are not the only species to welcome the end of winter. This is the time of year when insects and other pests start showing up in greater numbers and they can cause big problems in your foodservice operation. So you need to take some added precautions at this time.

First, store food six inches (15 centimeters) off the floor so you can clean the floor thoroughly and see any insect problems. Then get some caulk and seal up all the little cracks where those unwelcome guests could make their way in.

The experts say cockroaches are the major insect pest for many foodservice operations. Roaches can carry up to fifty different pathogens—a lot more than most flies. They are known for laying eggs in paper cartons, so you need to check your storage area regularly for evidence of cockroaches. Especially as we get into warmer weather, it is a good idea to check deliveries for roaches and their egg cases.

Life Cycle of a Cockroach



Egg Case



Nymph



Adult

Cockroaches are attracted to water and food sources. So you should repair any leaky plumbing or sources of condensation and you should clean up spilled food and grease. Also, make sure garbage is stored in tightly sealed containers far enough away from your facility to keep pests from being attracted to your door.

With some care and attention, you can keep those nasty pests away from your establishment.

Be sure your in-house pest control people know what they are doing. Pesticides are toxic to us as well as to insects, and some pesticides can only be used by someone who is certified.

For a serious infestation, you will need a pest control professional. But you can use sticky traps to find out how bad an infestation is. If you use pesticide sprays, make sure they are approved for use in commercial food establishments and check to see if you need a license to use the product.

Remember, keep your establishment clean and seal around docks, doors, windows and pipes. This will keep out most of the nasty pests.

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What if a Customer Gets Ill?

Would you know what to do if a customer called and said he got sick after eating in your restaurant—and you found out that one of your staff also had symptoms of foodborne illness that she thought were caused by something she ate in the restaurant?

There are two things at stake in this situation: your customers' health and your reputation. The quicker you act to protect your customers, the less damage will be done to your business by a foodborne illness outbreak.

Food poisonings don't normally go away. And they often get worse until you find the cause. So resist the urge to cover it up.

Don't Throw it Away

Here is what you can do. If you suspect a particular food, stop serving it immediately, but don't throw it away. Put it in the refrigerator, so the health department can test it if necessary. If it turns out to be contaminated, the testing will help in locating the problem. If it isn't contaminated, you'll be off the hook. Either way, it helps you to have the food sampled.

Report the incident to the health department right away. The department will work with you to find and

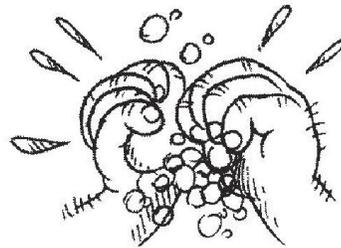
solve the problem and to prevent it from happening again.

Contact the owner of the establishment immediately—or headquarters if you are part of a chain. They have a right to know and can help you in making the decisions that will have to be made.

In summary, here's what you can do in this situation:

- If you suspect a particular food, stop serving it.
- Save the suspect food and label it "do not use."
- Call the health department.
- Call the establishment's owner or headquarters.

Fight Foodborne Illness... Wash Your Hands!



CDC's New Norovirus Guidelines

Keeping your hands clean is probably the single best thing you can do to prevent the spread of norovirus, according to the Centers for Disease Control, in the latest update of its norovirus guidelines.

Thorough handwashing with running water and plain or antiseptic soap works better than sanitizers, CDC says. Washing with plain soap and water reduces the number of microbes on hands by mechanical action rather than by killing the bugs.

Hand Sanitizers

Use of alcohol-based and other hand sanitizers against norovirus produces "mixed results," CDC says.

Hand sanitizers might be effective in between proper handwashing, but they should not be considered a substitute for soap and water handwashing, CDC says.

Environmental disinfection and exclusion of in-

fectured individuals are the other key control measures, CDC says.

Use of chemical disinfectants on environmental surfaces is another key way to control the spread of norovirus. CDC says bathrooms and high-touch surfaces such as door knobs and hand rails should get special attention.

There is not a lot of evidence that exclusion and isolation of infected individuals does much good, CDC says. But the idea is to reduce contact with infected individuals during the acute phase of illness, and while they are still shedding virus at high levels.

Cruise Ships

Passengers on cruise ships with gastroenteritis may be asked to remain isolated voluntarily in their cabins during their illness and for a period of 24–48 hours after their symptoms have resolved, CDC suggests. And asymptomatic foodservice workers who test positive for norovirus during an outbreak investigation should be excluded or restricted, CDC says.

How to Clean That Deli Slicer: New Poster from FDA

Researchers with the Rhode Island health department traced an outbreak of *Salmonella* last spring to food slicers used to cut tomatoes.

Food safety experts have known for years that it is very hard to maintain deli slicers in a clean and sanitized condition. The big problem is that the slicers are not taken apart and cleaned at least once per day.

The Food and Drug Administration has developed a new sanitation poster for users of deli slicers in food stores, delis, restaurants and other foodservice establishments.

The agency says slicers need routine professional maintenance so they don't become a food safety hazard.

Typical deli slicers have sealants and gaskets that can become worn over time through heavy use and cleaning. This can leave spaces that trap debris and moisture where they may not be adequately cleaned and sanitized using normal cleaning methods, the agency says.

English and Spanish copies of the posters are available at the Resources For You section of the FDA



website (www.fda.gov). They can also be downloaded from the training resources section.

FDA says its inspectors will be paying special attention during inspections to deli slicers and will check the equipment for worn parts. If there are any signs of cracks, chips, deep scratches or loss of adhesion or if any seam or part is found defective or damaged, the will have the food establishment remove the slicer from service until repaired or replaced. All repairs should be performed by the manufacturer's authorized service representatives.

If a facility is being inspected as part of a foodborne illness outbreak investigation, and if a slicer is suspected as a source of contamination, it may be necessary to break down slicers including the disassembly of components attached with fasteners to see if there is a problem with any seal or seam, the agency says.

The inspectors are also told, when collecting environmental samples, to be sure to take samples from surfaces and niches on the slicer where cross contamination hazards may have been created, such as seals and seams in or near the food contact zones.

ABCs of Clean Restrooms

People rarely say "I love your restaurant. You've got a really clean toilet." But although they don't say it, they judge the cleanliness of the back-of-the-house by what they can see of it, and that's usually the restroom.

Keeping the restrooms clean is just as important, in terms of the establishment's reputation, as keeping the kitchen spotless. You may have an immaculate preparation area, but if you have a dirty restroom, your customers will presume this is how you manage sanitation in general.

Here are some things you can do to make sure the restrooms will pass inspection by your customer or by the health department:

- Clearly assign responsibility for cleaning restrooms.
- Set a routine time for major cleaning, such as two hours before the lunch or dinner rush.
- The manager should check the restrooms thirty



minutes before the lunch or dinner crowd arrives.

- Assign someone to monitor the restroom during the lunch and dinner period.
- Train employees to report any problems to the manager and to clean up if it is their responsibility.
- Remind staff to wash their hands after using the restroom – and after cleaning the restroom.
- Never store food or food supplies in a restroom.

Test Yourself on Food Safety and Sanitation

Here is another chance to test your knowledge of food safety and sanitation issues. Be careful, some of the questions might seem to have more than one correct answer. Try to find the best one.

1. Cockroaches really like to lay their eggs in:
 - a. Dry areas.
 - b. Sunlit areas.
 - c. Paper cartons.
 - d. Near doorways.
2. You can help to make sure your restroom passes inspection by your customers if you:
 - a. Check the restrooms yourself thirty minutes before lunch and dinner.
 - b. Assign someone to monitor the restroom during lunch and dinner service.
 - c. Get your employees to check throughout the day and empty baskets and mop up spills.
 - d. All of the above.
3. If a customer becomes ill and you think it might have been because of a contaminated food from your establishment:

- a. Immediately throw the food away.
- b. Stop serving the food, but don't throw it away, label it "do not use."
- c. Do nothing until you get more information.
- d. None of the above.

4. The best way to help prevent the spread of norovirus in food establishments is to:
 - a. Get all food workers to wash their hands with soap and water.
 - b. Keep infected individuals away from food, food areas and other people.
 - c. Not work if you are sick with a norovirus.
 - d. All of the above.
5. For insect infestations, you need to:
 - a. Use the most powerful pesticide you can find.
 - b. Use sticky traps.
 - c. Put out poison baits.
 - d. Call a pest control professional.

Answers: 1 (c), 2 (d), 3 (b), 4 (d), 5 (d).



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