

The Food Review

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FOODBORNE ILLNESS

No food business intentionally makes their customers ill, but unintentional foodborne illnesses occur daily.

Consumer Complaint

Very often a consumer will assume foodborne illness symptoms are the result of the last meal eaten. Depending on the symptoms and the time since meals have been eaten, the cause of illness can be a **poisoning** from a chemical or natural toxin or an **infection** from a bacteria, virus, or parasite.

When your business receives a phone complaint do your employees know how to appropriately respond to the caller? Does your employee orientation training cover general and crisis situations? Handling a food illness complaint can have different levels of consequences for the business's reputation and financial health.

L.A.S.T. – How to respond to the call

Listen to the caller; do not interrupt.

Apologize. "I'm sorry you are ill." Don't make excuses – you may not be at fault. Don't be argumentative – you may be at fault.

Solve. Seek a solution for the caller's concern or problem. Certainly look into the concern. If you promise to "get back to the caller" do so, even if you have not found or solved the problem yet.

Thank the caller for their information and for their concern.



A good response is to say "I'm sorry you are ill. Can you provide me more information?" Listen to the complaint and get as much information as possible: who's calling, phone numbers, foods eaten, when, number of persons eating, how many ill, symptoms and when they started (and hopefully, ended), anyone seen by health providers?

Explain to the caller that you will furnish this information to the Health District and it is appropriate for the caller to also contact the Health District. Provide the health district's phone number - 208-327-7499. Or, have the caller report online via the website www.reportfoodpoisoning.org.



Many times the complainant merely wants to report a concern, or they may want immediate compensation. It may be best to notify your insurance company to deal with claims or defer until you have had time to contact the health district and you and the district have completed the investigation.

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Food Review is sent quarterly, free of charge to all licensed food establishments in our health district. We hope to include news of interest and importance. Topic ideas or articles written by the readers are welcome to be sent to: Editor, Food Review, CDHD, 707 N. Armstrong Pl., Boise, ID 83704. Extra copies of the newsletter are available at your local Health Department office.

Ada and Boise County

707 N. Armstrong Pl.
Boise, ID 83704-0825
Tel. (208) 327-7499
Fax (208) 327-8553

Rob Howarth

Environmental Health Director
rhowarth@cdhd.idaho.gov

Mike Reno - Supervisor

Land Based Programs
mreno@cdhd.idaho.gov

Tom Schmalz - Supervisor

Facility Based Programs
tschmalz@cdhd.idaho.gov

Bob Mayer

bmayer@cdhd.idaho.gov

Bud Fulleton

bfulleto@cdhd.idaho.gov

Ann Potcher

apotcher@cdhd.idaho.gov

Tammie McCarter

tmccarte@cdhd.idaho.gov

Frank Isenberg

fisenber@cdhd.idaho.gov

Deb Carney

dcarney@cdhd.idaho.gov

Bob Jue

rbjue@cdhd.idaho.gov

Jerry Davis - Boise County

jdavis@cdhd.idaho.gov

Elmore County:

520 E. 8th North
Mtn. Home, ID 83647
Tel. (208) 587-4407
Fax (208) 587-3521

Marty Jones

mjjones@cdhd.idaho.gov

Valley County:

703 N. 1st,
McCall, ID 83638
Tel. (208) 634-7194
Fax (208) 634-2174

Jeff Lappin

jlappin@cdhd.idaho.gov

Josh Kriz

jkriz@cdhd.idaho.gov

What should you do next?

Save any leftover food implicated by the caller. The best result of an investigation is that there is no evidence of food-associated illness. The next best scenario is that there is a food associated with illness and the problem can be quickly remedied. More difficult is when there is an outbreak (more than two separate, unrelated households, linked by common food and place) and you have ignored a patron complaint.



Most foodborne contamination is only discovered after people have suffered the effects: nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea or more serious symptoms such as a high fever, blood in the stool, or prolonged vomiting. Fortunately, techniques for tracing outbreaks, quickly finding the source of infection and correcting the cause of the outbreak are constantly improving.

Who's at Risk?

In normally healthy people, symptoms generally last several days without causing other serious problems. No one can be completely protected from foodborne illnesses. Effects are usually more severe among the very young (infants, especially those who are bottle-fed, and children), pregnant women, the elderly, people with liver disease, and those with weakened immune systems. These patients may experience more serious illness, hospitalization may be required, and death can be the final outcome.

Don't Ignore the Complaint

Whether from an employee or a customer, a complaint about food served can be an early warning that something is wrong. Investigate the complaint. Consult with the health district. Our job is to keep your food safe for the public. An early intervention can save you embarrassment, publicity, and economic losses.

Here are links to tables of non-infectious illness agents (chemical) and bacterial, viral, and parasitic ones.

- http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/36/2004_food_table_non.pdf
- http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/36/2004_food_table_bact.pdf
- http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/36/2004_food_table_vira.pdf
- http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/36/2004_food_table_para.pdf

Where is the Water?

What do you do when water to your food establishment has been shut off?

1. Notify the health department
2. Find out why the water is off

When there is no water service, the food establishment must stop food service until the health department gives approval to continue service. A restaurant cannot operate without water. Water is needed for hand washing, proper cleaning of food contact surfaces, food preparation; fountain drinks, flushing toilets & urinals, and general uses. Approval for an alternate supply with sufficient capacity must be obtained from the health department. Review the Idaho Food Code, sections 5-103.11 and 5-104.11 for more information. The Idaho Food Code can be downloaded from the CDHD website: <http://cdhd.idaho.gov/EH/food/regulations.htm>.



Main Office • 707 N. Armstrong Pl. • Boise Id 83704-0825 • (208) 375-5211 • Fax 327-8500
 Serving Valley, Elmore, Boise and Ada Counties

Establishment Name _____

Cooling Chart Address _____ Phone # _____

Food Product							
Refrigeration or Room Temp <small>(where food is cooled)</small>							
Pan Material							
Pan L x W or Diameter							
Depth of Food in Pan							
Date							
Time Food Reached 135°F		:	:	:	:	:	:
After 1 Hour	Temperature	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F
	Time	:	:	:	:	:	:
After 2 Hours <small>(must be 70°F or below)</small>	Temperature	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F
	Time	:	:	:	:	:	:
After 3 Hours	Temperature	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F
	Time	:	:	:	:	:	:
After 4 Hours	Temperature	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F
	Time	:	:	:	:	:	:
After 5 Hours	Temperature	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F
	Time	:	:	:	:	:	:
After 6 Hours <small>(must be 41°F or below)</small>	Temperature	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F	°F
	Time	:	:	:	:	:	:
Corrective Action Taken							
Person in Charge Signature							

Proper Labeling of Sandwiches & Bakery Products

Do you make sandwiches or baked products and package them for sale? The Idaho Food Code (3-602.22) requires food packaged in a food establishment to have a label that identifies the food, the ingredients in descending order by weight, a declaration of the quantity, the name and place of the business, and possibly nutritional content.



Allergens - Intensify Quality Control

An increasing number of recalls are due to undeclared allergens. Milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat and soybeans are the most common “ingredients of public health concern,” accounting for over 90 percent of all reported food allergies in the United States.

It's essential that products declare these ingredients on the label if they are in the food. If they are not declared then the product is mislabeled, and any product already shipped or delivered will need to be recalled.

How can you prevent a food recall due to undeclared allergens? According to Lisa Volk, director of FSIS Office of Field Operations, Recall Management Staff, “...more double-checking of label and ingredient statements and better quality control could go a long way.”

In many companies today, changing ingredient suppliers and multiple product lines can make their food production process complicated and make it a challenge to ensure all ingredients are absolutely controlled.

The responsibility to ensure that the food label accurately reflects the product rests with the company. FSIS (Food Safety Inspection Service of USDA) recommends that operators double-check to ensure that product formulations match the ingredient statements. This is particularly important when suppliers of ingredients are changed. A seemingly insignificant change in the vendor or ingredient specifications may result in the unintended introduction of an allergen and, potentially, a recall.

By holding tested product pending the test results, and by double-checking that your ingredient statement is accurate and that there are no undeclared allergens, perhaps even making it a critical control point, you can avoid costly recalls, helping to protect public health and your bottom line simultaneously.

Rapid Cooling will Prevent Bacterial Growth

Potentially hazardous food is food that can support bacterial growth. Such foods must be cooled from 135° F to 70°F in 2 hours, and then from 70°F to 41°F or below in the next 4 hours. If you do not rapidly cool foods and test your procedure to meet these standards you could be putting your customers at risk. Every food establishment should have a standard operating procedure on hand and available for food service employees to review and insure they are serving safe food. The procedures are easy to test and document with the use of an accurate thermometer and recording results on a cooling chart. A cooling chart has been provided in this edition of the Food Review and can also be downloaded from the CDHD website: <http://cdhd.idaho.gov/pdfs/eh/CoolingChart.pdf>.

Food cooling requirements and suggested methods are described in the Idaho Food Code, sections 3-501.14 and 3-501.15. The Idaho Food Code is also available for download from the CDHD website: <http://cdhd.idaho.gov/EH/food/regulations.htm>.

Rapid reheat of potentially hazardous food (PHF) is also required to kill bacteria and prevent their growth. Reheat PHFs to 165°F in two hours or less, then hold hot at 135°F or above.

Wild Edible Mushrooms

Are you getting your mushrooms from an approved source?

That's a good question to ask.

Morel mushroom season is here and there are "look-alike" mushroom varieties that are not safe for human consumption. Only an expert can identify the safe mushrooms to eat. As you know some wild mushrooms are poisonous, so a mushroom expert is needed to be sure you are serving a safe food product.

Here are some questions to consider.

1. Was the mushroom identified while fresh?
2. Who identified the mushrooms as safe to consume?
3. Were the mushrooms stored refrigerated?
4. Are the mushrooms firm?
5. Do the mushrooms have a fresh appearance?
6. What education does the picker/identifier have that verifies their knowledge in this area?



If you are searching for wild edible mushrooms to use in your recipes or to sell, then you need to know that they are safe to eat to protect your customers and your business. Your expertise or that of your supplier must be documented.