

## Food Handlers Fitness to Work

- You can pass on illnesses when you work with or around food. To prevent this:
  - Tell the manager immediately if you are ill.
  - Wash and dry your hands with soap and warm water, especially after going to the toilet.
- You can affect the safety of food when working with or around food.
  - Your hands and clothes can spread harmful bacteria or viruses to food or surfaces that will come into contact with food.
  - These bacteria or viruses can come from you if you are ill.
- Tell the manager if you have:
  - Diarrhoea or vomiting.
  - Stomach pain, nausea, fever or jaundice.
  - Someone living with you with diarrhoea or vomiting.
  - Infected skin, nose or throat.
- If you fall ill at work:
  - Seek to leave the food handling area and tell your manager what has happened.
- When returning to work after illness:
  - Take extra care when washing your hands.
  - Tell the manager if they don't know you were ill, for example if you were ill on holiday.
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water before working with any food, especially after going to the toilet.
  - Also wash your hands after handling anything that might be contaminated and throughout the day.
  - Avoidance is better than removal – where practical try not to touch things that might require you to then wash your hands.

## **Managers**

### **Understand:**

- The law requires you to exclude anyone from work if they have an infection that can be passed on through food and there is any likelihood of them contaminating food directly or indirectly.
- This would apply to people employed as food handlers or to other staff working in areas where open food is handled.
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting are the main symptoms of infection that can be transmitted through food.
- Other symptoms can include stomach cramps or pain, nausea and fever. Skin infections are also a problem.
- This is because some infections, mainly from bacteria and viruses, can spread in faeces and vomit. This can contaminate infected persons' hands when they have diarrhoea or vomiting. Vomiting can also spread it directly. If an infected person contaminates food or food contact surfaces, in many cases the infection can spread to people who eat the food.

### **Action to take:**

- Ensure that all staff handling food and anyone working in a food handling area knows to report the symptoms of infection and if they have close contact with someone with these symptoms.
- Exclude staff with these symptoms from working with or around open food.

### **Returning to work:**

- The exclusion period is normally 48 hours from when symptoms stop naturally. Different action is required in special cases.
- When excluded staff return to work ensure that they take extra hygiene precautions, particularly hand washing.
- Not all cases of diarrhoea or vomiting are infectious, eg morning sickness, so exclusion is not always needed.

### **Other facts:**

- People can have infections without symptoms so it is important that managers try to ensure that everyone washes and dries their hands regularly at work, especially after using the toilet.
- Managers should assess the risk of food safety of anyone found to have been working with or around food whilst infectious and take the appropriate action to ensure that unsafe food is not released.
- If you are not sure what to do in any situation, you can seek advice from a health professional or your local authority.



## **For further information**

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