

Foodborne Illness Risk Factors

Risk factors are important practices or procedures identified as the most prevalent contributing factors of foodborne illness or injury.

Did You Know...

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there are 48 million people in the United States who get foodborne illnesses each year. These illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. The top 5 factors contributing to these illnesses are:

1. Poor Personal Hygiene

Poor personal hygiene practices serve as the leading cause of foodborne illnesses. Food establishments must promote a culture of food safety by developing an employee illness policy, proper handwashing procedures, and a no barehand contact policy with ready to eat foods.



2. Improper Holding Temperatures

Cold foods shall maintain $\leq 41^{\circ}\text{F}$ and hot foods shall maintain $\geq 135^{\circ}\text{F}$. If foods stay in between those temperatures for any period, ensure they are time and temperature controlled and documented. Time and temperature control for safety (TCS) foods must be date marked and stored no longer than 7 days. Remember, first day of preparation or when a food package is opened, counts as day 1. When in doubt, throw it out!

3. Improper Cooking Temperatures

The Food and Drug Administration has established minimum internal cooking temperatures for foods to ensure pathogen counts are reduced to safe levels. Ensure metal stem thermometers are conveniently stored and accessible for employees to monitor final cooking temperatures.

4. Contaminated Equipment/Cross-Contamination

Cross contamination can occur from a variety of sources, including chemical and raw foods. To prevent the spread of harmful pathogens, all equipment and utensils shall be properly cleaned and sanitized. Ensure sanitizer solutions are monitored using their appropriate test strips. Low sanitizer concentrations will fail in effectively removing pathogens from surfaces, while high concentrations will leave a toxic residue.

5. Food from Unsafe Sources

All foods distributed in licensed food establishments must be obtained from approved sources that comply with applicable laws and regulations. All food shall be inspected upon delivery to ensure proper temperatures, it's condition and overall sanitation.