

Food Safety Newsletter

Van Wert County Health Department

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Tips on Cooling

- Use shallow metal pans and only place 2 inches of food in the pan.
- Pre-freeze the pan (metal only)
- Leave food uncovered until cool.
- ADD ICE. Many times you have to add water to soup when you reheat it so add some ice before placing it in the cooler.
- Use an ice bath. Place the pan in a sink or larger container filled with ice and stir. This is a fairly fast and easy way to cool that reduces the risk of foodborne illness.
- Use a Rapi-Kool device or other clean container filled with water and frozen. Drop it in the hot food or use it to stir the food.
- DO NOT USE TALL OR PLASTIC CONTAINERS!

Handwashing and Towel Use

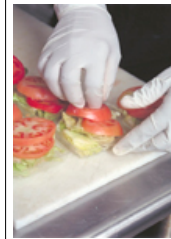
The effectiveness of handwashing to prevent foodborne illness cannot be argued. However, proper handwashing must occur in order to be completely effective. Proper steps for handwashing include:

1. Use warm, running water to wet hands.
2. Apply soap and rub vigorously for 10-15 seconds.
3. Rinse hands under the warm running water.
4. Dry thoroughly using a paper towel or a warm-air dryer.
5. Use the paper towel to turn off the faucet.

A cook working alone on the cook line at a full service restaurant has to be really careful to avoid contaminating food. One minute the cook can be placing a raw hamburger patty on the grill or breaking eggs into a frying pan, and in the next moment handling prepared, ready-to-eat foods

such as hamburger buns, tomato slices, and toast. This person has a difficult and extremely important job. During recent inspections I have observed a lot of food employees using a towel on their apron to wipe their hands. One situation stands out. A cook was handling raw meats and wiping her hands on her apron towel and then handling ready-to-eat foods without wearing gloves or washing her hands! Most of you are cringing right now, but it happens more often than I would like to admit. First of all, towels can harbor bacteria and cannot be used in place of handwashing. Even if the towel was not used after handling raw meat, it still may harbor other bacteria that will contaminate the hands when they are wiped on the towel. The towel was not removing any bacteria; it was only re-contaminating the hands every time it was used. A person working on a cook line, handling multiple utensils and different foods must take the time to wash his/her hands. This

person was handling bacon and frozen hamburger patties. Using utensils to handle these items would be one way to avoid washing the hands often. Also, gloves are required to be worn when handling ready-to-eat foods unless another means can be used to prevent touching the food with bare hands.



The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code states that hands must be washed when switching between working with raw food and working with ready-to-eat food and before putting on gloves. Some cooks will wear one glove to handle buns and ready-to-eat foods and use the other hand to handle utensils. Find what works best for you, and please keep food safety in mind. Towels are not an acceptable method of handwashing!

Consumer Advisory

What?

A consumer advisory is a statement that informs people that the consumption of raw or undercooked animal products increases your likelihood of foodborne illness.

When?

The serving of raw or undercooked animal products requires a statement of potential risk due to the possible presence

of foodborne pathogens in these foods. If you serve undercooked hamburgers, eggs, or tenderized steaks, then an advisory is needed. Also, if raw eggs, meat, or shellfish are served, it will require the addition of an advisory.

Where?

The advisories can be located in any of several places; however the preferred location would be on the menu with an asterisk by the items

that are affected. If you are not planning to print a new menu soon, I would recommend printing the advisory on return address labels and placing them on the existing menu. In the event of no menu, a sign can be conspicuously posted.
Example:
Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.

When employees use cell phones while working with food they are not only distracted from their job, they are also contaminating their hands. Create a cell phone policy to prevent this issue.

Facility Review Required

As many of you know facility review is required when planning to construct or significantly alter a food facility. Many facilities are not submitting plans to the Health Department as required when they significantly alter a facility. If you are planning to remodel and are unsure of whether facility review is required, please call. Submitting plans after a remodeling project is finished and taking the risk that

something is not in compliance with the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code can be costly.

The proper steps for facility review are listed below.

1. Contact the Health Dept. **before** starting any construction to obtain a Facility Review Packet.
2. Read through the packet and fill out all forms thoroughly.
3. Submit the facility review

application, fee, and any other required documents.

4. Wait for approval of the plans before beginning construction.
5. When finished, call the Health Department for a pre-licensing inspection.



Not only does the Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code require that a thermometer is available, it also requires a thermometer with a suitable small-diameter probe if the facility cooks thin foods such as hamburger or sausage patties or chicken breasts. When this requirement was first placed into effect, there were not a lot of options. However, since then many companies have come up with an affordable (\$15-25) thermometer with a thin tip. Here are some common thermometers in the industry.

Employee Health Policy

If an employee is sick or has been informed that he/she has a disease that is transmissible through food, then that employee is required to report the illness to the person in charge at the facility. If the employee has any of the following symptoms then that employee must be restricted from working with food.

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Jaundice
- Sore throat with fever

If the food employee is

diagnosed with any of the following illnesses then the employee must be excluded from working with food until a physician has released the food employee.

- Campylobacter
- Cryptosporidium
- Cyclospora
- Entamoeba histolytica
- Enterohemorrhagic or shiga-toxin producing Escherichia coli
- Giardia
- Hepatitis A

- Norovirus
- Salmonella spp.
- Salmonella Thypi
- Shigella
- Vibrio cholera
- Yersinia

The person-in-charge at the facility is responsible for ensuring that employees are not working with food when they should be restricted or excluded. The facility should have an employee health policy stating the above information and a log to document any illnesses in the facility.

Disappearing Act

Two common items missing from a food service operation or retail food establishment are a thermometer and sanitizer test strips. The Ohio Uniform Food Safety Code Chapter 3717-1-04.2 (G) requires that food temperature measuring devices shall be provided and readily accessible for use. Section (I) requires that a

test kit or other device that accurately measures the concentration of the sanitizing solution be provided. Ensure that these items are accessible for employees that need to use them. The employee cooking or preparing food should be using the thermometer to check temperatures. Keep in them in a drawer or

container in the food preparation area.

Sanitizer test strips are usually kept far from the sink to avoid getting wet. But then, how often are they used? Try using Velcro® to stick them to the wall or on a shelf near the sink so they are accessible. Do not put them directly over the sink to avoid accidents.



- Types of Thermometers
1. Infrared and probe combination with a thin-tip
 2. Digital thin-tip
 3. Thin-tip probe
 4. Infrared
 5. Regular-stem probe with a dial