

Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health, Environmental Health Division

Environmental Health staff conduct food protection activities in both food service and retail food establishments. They also inspect lodging facilities, public swimming pools, manufactured home parks, youth camps, water supplies, and public health nuisances.

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PLEASE ROUTE TO FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR OR KITCHEN MANAGER

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 click on "Licensing & Inspection"

"Name That Violation" Answer

There are multiple violations in the picture on page 2; 1) The handsink is blocked; 2) The bag in the box pop is too close to the handsink; 3) There is not an approved wall surface to the left of the handsink; 4) There is no splash shield on the side of the handsink next to the ice machine.

thought for food provides useful information to managers of food service establishments licensed by Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health.

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Zack Hansen, Director

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 Community Environmental Health

Comments?

Call Mindy Stepnick at 651-266-1174 or email mindy.stepnick@co.ramsey.mn.us.

thought for food

For managers of food service establishments licensed by Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health

Under the Microscope: Norovirus



Norovirus is a leading cause of illness from contaminated food in the United States. Nationally, over 20 million people become ill with the virus every year and in 2015, 50% of foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota were caused by the virus. Norovirus is very contagious and outbreaks can occur anywhere people gather or where food is served. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, body aches and a mild fever, and it usually begins 24-48 hours after swallowing the virus, lasting one to two days. The virus passes from one person to another by the fecal-oral route. The virus comes from the feces or vomit of people who are sick or have just been sick. It only takes a small amount of the virus to cause infection in other people. People infected with norovirus are most contagious when actually sick with vomiting or diarrhea but can also infect others before symptoms start and up to two to three weeks after they recover.

Illness that is caused by norovirus is often mistakenly called "stomach flu", which can be a very confusing term since norovirus is not related to influenza.

Influenza is a respiratory illness with symptoms that include high fever, chills, body aches, sore throat and coughing. Norovirus is not a respiratory illness and is not spread through breathing or coughing.

Food service workers often go to work when they are sick and may contaminate food. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in five food service workers have reported working while sick with vomiting and diarrhea. Fear of job loss and leaving coworkers short staffed were factors in the decision to work. In a recent outbreak in Minnesota, employees who had been sick with diarrhea prepared food items that were eaten by restaurant guests and at least 25 guests became ill with the virus. An outbreak also occurred at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland earlier this summer with staff people from the California delegation becoming ill.

The majority of norovirus illnesses can be prevented by not working when ill, practicing good handwashing, and limiting bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Hands should always be washed with soap and a nail brush for a minimum of 20 seconds, and dried with paper towels before starting work. Hands should also be washed after using the bathroom, before eating, and before preparing and handling food. Typically, ready-to-eat foods are implicated in norovirus outbreaks and it is very important that food handlers limit direct hand contact with ready-to-eat foods by using utensils, deli tissues or gloves. A ready-to-eat food

is one that goes from preparation to consumption and does not get a further heat treatment. According to CDC, the three most common foods involved in norovirus outbreaks are leafy greens (such as lettuce), fresh fruits and shellfish. Many problems also occur with salads, sandwiches and bakery items.

Norovirus is very hardy and can be difficult to kill. It can live on kitchen surfaces for up to two weeks and resist many common disinfectants and sanitizers. If your facility experiences an outbreak, a chlorine solution of 1,000 ppm should be used on hard, non-porous surfaces that are contaminated or touched by people. These surfaces can include prep tables, sinks, food equipment, pop machines, door handles and fixtures in the bathrooms.

Managers can be proactive in preventing outbreaks by requiring food service workers to stay home when they are sick, monitoring employees for proper handwashing procedure, and providing continuous training in food safety practices.

thought for food

fall 2016 topics

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Ask a Sanitarian...

Workers who prepare food while experiencing diarrhea and/or vomiting are frequently linked to foodborne illness outbreaks in restaurants and other retail food outlets. As a food manager or worker you have a responsibility to protect yourself and your guests from foodborne illness.

Q: How soon can an employee return to work after being sick?

A: The Minnesota Food Code prohibits any food employee from working when the employee has diarrhea or vomiting. The employee cannot return to work until 24 hours after the symptoms have completely disappeared.

Q: What are the reporting requirements for ill employees?

A: The Minnesota Food Code requires every food employee to report any of the following to your manager or person-in-charge:

1. Any incident of diarrhea, vomiting, or jaundice (yellow skin or eye color), regardless of the cause of the symptoms, within the last 72 hours;
2. An open, infected wound, so precautions can be taken to prevent food contamination;
3. Any of the following infections when diagnosed:
 - E. coli O157:H7
 - Salmonella
 - Shigella
 - Hepatitis A.

Each food establishment is required to notify Ramsey County Public Health of any of the following events:

- An employee with any of the infections listed above;
- A complaint from a customer who reports becoming ill with diarrhea or vomiting after eating at your establishment;
- A complaint from a customer who tests positive for E. coli O157:H7, Salmonella, Shigella, or Hepatitis A after eating at your establishment.

Q: What is the difference between excluding and restricting an ill employee?

A: The person-in-charge is required to exclude from working a food employee who has, or has had in the last 24 hours, any vomiting or diarrhea. The person-in-charge is required to restrict a food employee from working with exposed food, clean equipment, and clean utensils in a food establishment if the employee has a bacterial pathogen capable of being transmitted by food, including Salmonella spp., Shigella spp., or Escherichia coli O157:H7, until the health department has evaluated the potential for foodborne disease transmission;

For more information about foodborne illness, contact your Ramsey County sanitarian at 651-266-1199.

If you have a question you would like to ask a sanitarian, please send an email to: mindy.stepnick@co.ramsey.mn.us



Name That Violation
(see bottom of page 4 for answer)

Look at the picture on the left. Can you tell what this food establishment is doing wrong according to health codes? The answer can be found at the bottom of page 4.



Using Gloves in Food Prep

Depending upon the level of contamination on your hands, handwashing alone may not be adequate in preventing the transmission of bacteria and viruses from your hands to food. In fact, poor personal hygiene of food workers is one of the main causes of foodborne illness in the food service industry.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that hands are the most common means by which viruses are transmitted and that contamination of food by an infected food worker is the most common mode of transmission of hepatitis A and norovirus in foodborne illness outbreaks. For this reason, the Minnesota Food Code requires that employees limit direct hand contact with food. Using food utensils like deli tissues, scoops, tongs, or spatulas is one way to meet this requirement. Single-use gloves can also provide additional food protection by placing a barrier between a food worker's hands and the food. However, single-use gloves are only effective if placed on properly washed hands and changed at appropriate times during the food operation. If used incorrectly, they can become another source of food contamination. If an employee has a boil, infected wound or other lesion on their hand, they must apply a waterproof bandage and wear a single-use glove or finger cot over the bandage.

When Single-Use Gloves Are Used:

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after wearing gloves, and when changing to a new pair of gloves.
- Change gloves between handling raw foods and cooked or ready-to-eat foods.
- Discard gloves when torn, contaminated, or removed for any reason.
- Change gloves when interruptions occur in the food operation.
- Change gloves frequently, at least once per hour.
- Never reuse gloves under any circumstances.



Food Manager Certification



Food Manager Certification

Full Day Class • 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

This class is for uncertified food managers. Call 651-266-1199 for a registration form.

2017 Certification Course Dates

Jan. 18	Feb. 15	March 15	April 12
May 17	June 14	Aug. 16	Sept. 13
Oct. 11	Nov. 8		

Food Manager Recertification

Four Hour Class • 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This class is for food managers who were previously certified and need to be recertified. Call 651-266-1199 for a registration form.

2017 Recertification Course Dates

Feb. 14	June 15	Oct. 12
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Food Manager Certification Exam Retests

Exam re-tests are given at the end of each Food Manager Certification class.

To request a re-test application, call 651-266-1199 and leave a message.