



# Food for thought

Food Safety Newsletter | July 2019

## Food contamination

How foods are stored can greatly affect the rate foods deteriorate, or their likelihood of being contaminated. Food contamination can cause illness, infection and poisoning to consumers; as well as having devastating and lasting effects on the reputation of a food business.

Contamination of food can occur anywhere. The 4 most common types of food contamination include:

- Biological contamination – bacteria and viruses e.g. Salmonella, Campylobacter, E.coli, Listeria, Norovirus
- Chemical contamination – cleaning chemicals and pesticides
- Physical contamination – foreign materials e.g glass metal and other fragments
- Cross-contamination – allergens, storage, food contact surfaces and personal hygiene

## Protecting food from contamination

Taking a few precautions can reduce the risk of food contamination:

- Wash your hands before starting any food handling
- Use food grade sanitiser (Tip: some sanitisers are only effective for up to 24 hours from the time diluted)
- Follow manufacturer's storage instructions
- Keep food storage and containers clean and dry
- Always use food grade containers and ensure food is covered and well sealed with lids, foil or plastic wrap. Never store food in opened tin cans
- Regularly clean and sanitise food storage containers and food preparation contact surfaces
- Store potentially hazardous food under appropriate temperature control

## Protecting foods from contamination during refrigeration:

- Clean your fridge and cool room regularly – every week or two
- Maintain temperature control by servicing your fridge regularly
- Don't overstock
- Separate raw and cooked foods
- Prepare smaller portions to reduce the risk of exposure

## Tips for minimising contamination:

- If in doubt throw it out
- Ensure that chemicals are safe to be used around foods
- Do not engage in handling of food for a food business when suspected to have symptoms of sickness
- Provide all employees with appropriate training in food safety practices and food hygiene matters – Take time when training to ensure food handlers understand their responsibilities

## Unsafe and unsuitable food

Food businesses in NSW are responsible for ensuring that food sold is safe and suitable for consumption.

Food is considered to be unsafe when it would be likely to cause physical harm to a person who might later consume it. Unsuitable food is any food not fit for human consumption.

### How does date marking impact the sale of unsafe and unsuitable foods?

**Use by:** The manufacture of the food determines the 'use by' date, and food is considered to be unsafe the day after the date of expiry.

It is illegal to sell food which has passed its use by date.

Note: Food businesses need to take great care to ensure food is not used, handled or sold after a use by date, regardless of the judgement of the suitability of the food.

**Best before:** Foods which are safe to be sold and consumed (provided that the food is fit for human consumption) following the marked date. Foods with a 'best before' can be expected to retain their colour, taste, texture and flavour.

Foods marked 'best before' can be sold after the 'best before' date, provided the food is not deteriorated or perished.



## Bacteria in focus: Norovirus

### What is norovirus?

Norovirus is a highly contagious gastroenteritis virus and is particularly prevalent throughout winter. Symptoms generally persist for up to two days and consist of:

- nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- fever and chills
- headache and muscle aches

### How is norovirus spread?

Food handlers pose one of the most significant risks for spreading norovirus through:

- contact with infected vomit or stool
- contaminated food or drink
- contact with airborne particles
- contact with contaminated objects
- close person-to-person contact

### How can you stop the spread of norovirus?

Good hygiene practices are essential to stopping the spread of norovirus; this includes:

- frequent hand washing
- immediately clean soiled clothing
- exclude yourself from work when sick

## Hand hygiene

### Keep hands clean and food safe



1. Hands are only washed in the basin provided.



2. Use soap to work up a lather.



3. Wash palms, fingers, thumbs, nails and wrists (use a nail brush if necessary).



4. Rinse off soap by washing hands under running hot water.



5. Dry with paper towel.

*Wagga Wagga Council would like to acknowledge the use of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services' Keep hands clean and food safe poster.*

This newsletter has been developed to ensure open lines of communication exist between Council and the local food industry.

Contact Wagga Wagga City Council if there are any changes within your food business, including; change of ownership, structure/fit-out or a change in the type of food prepared.

Environmental Health Officers  
Call: 1300 292 442  
council@wagga.nsw.gov.au  
[www.wagga.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au)