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Keeping Employees Healthy During Cold and Flu Season

Coughing, sneezing, aches, fever. It's winter, and that means a variety of illnesses have arrived. Already this season, flu-related deaths in Idaho have surpassed the number from this time last year. While the flu shot remains your best defense in fighting the flu and protecting those you interact with at work, and your loved ones at home, there are also some basic precautions that can go a long way in protecting yourself and your employees during cold and flu season:

Promote Vaccination

Encourage workers to get the seasonal flu vaccine. The flu shot is easier than ever to get with it being offered on a walk-in basis at pharmacies and many health care providers. Remember, it takes approximately two weeks for the flu shot to become effective.

Remind Employees of Your Illness Policy

Know your illness policy and enforce it. Remind and encourage employees to report

illness. Review the illness policy with employees. Food service employees who are ill with vomiting or diarrhea must be excluded from working in the establishment. Use the Employee Illness Log to track illness — available at cdhd.idaho.gov/eh-food-foodsafetyresources.php.

Call your local health department if an employee is diagnosed with Salmonella, E. coli, Shigella, Hepatitis A or Norovirus.

Keep the Workplace Clean

Frequently clean and sanitize all commonly touched work surfaces, work areas, and equipment (e.g., telephones, doorknobs, countertops, restrooms, registers, etc.). Clean and sanitize the common touch surfaces in the dining area too. These practices will reduce the risk of foodborne illness in a food establishment.



WE'RE A



To protect the health of **everyone** at CDHD, no use of tobacco or vaping is allowed anywhere on our property.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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Food Review is sent biannually, free of charge to all licensed food establishments in our health district. We hope to include news of interest and importance. Topic ideas or articles written by the readers are welcome to be sent to: publicinfo@cdhd.idaho.gov. Extra copies of the newsletter are available at your local Health Department office.

NOROVIRUS: FACTS AND PREVENTION

Norovirus is the leading cause of foodborne illness from contaminated hands and food.

Food can become contaminated with norovirus when:

- There is bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food
- Working when ill – with symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, fever
- Food is contaminated where it grows or is harvested

Food handlers with norovirus illness can spread the virus to others. Spreading occurs when:

- Infected people have stool or vomit on their hands and then touch the food with bare hands. (The virus can also spread by people who do not appear ill.)
- Hands are not washed thoroughly and other surfaces are touched i.e. menus, tabletops, cutting boards, utensils and door handles
- Food is contaminated at their source, i.e. oysters harvested from contaminated water OR vegetables & fruits become contaminated in the field
- Tiny drops of vomit from an infected person sprays through the air and drops on the food
- Food is shared with co-workers (drinking soda from the same cup or sharing a utensil)

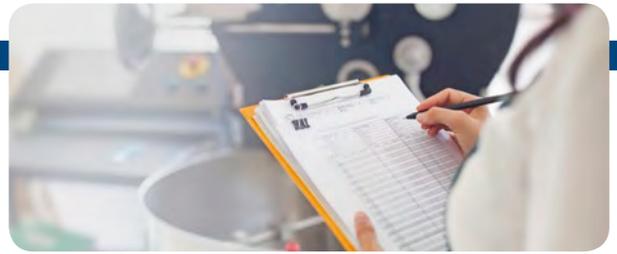


5 tips to prevent norovirus from spreading:

1. Practice proper hand hygiene – Wash carefully a minimum of 15–20 seconds (you must wash hands after using the restroom, in between glove changes, after leaving and returning to your work station and any other time as applicable).
2. Wash fruits and vegetables and cook seafood thoroughly.
3. When you are sick, do not prepare food for others.
4. Clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces with an approved sanitizer.
5. Wash laundry thoroughly that may be contaminated with vomit or feces.



Most Common Violations



The most common major risk factor violations that Central District Health Department Environmental Health Specialists observe while conducting food safety inspections are #22: Cold Holding, #16: Food Surfaces Clean (Sanitizing), #10: Handwashing Facilities and #23: Date Marking. When these major risk factors are not controlled, there is an increased risk of a foodborne illness outbreak. By having procedures in place that include monitoring and record keeping, we can prevent foodborne illness in the community.

Cold Holding violations are most common. Bacterial growth and toxin production can occur if time and temperature control are not monitored. The temperature danger zone is between 41°F to 135°F. Bacterial growth increases with an increase in temperature in this zone.

What to do:

- Use a reliable and accurate thermometer to check foods that require temperature control for safety. This is a valuable tool to control this major risk factor.
- Monitor and record refrigeration equipment in several locations, especially a unit that is not consistent in keeping food 41°F and below.
- Monitor open tabletop preparation units. Equipment that meets NSF/ANSI Standard 7 after 1997 are designed to keep food in these units below 41°F. Even during busy times these units are designed to keep food cold if they are used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Designate an employee to monitor using an accurate thermometer to probe the internal temperature of food.

Food Surfaces Clean is the second most common violation.

What to do:

- Dishwashers not sanitizing is the most common observation. Daily monitoring of the sanitization rinse cycle in your machine will increase compliance with this requirement.
- Have a chart near your dishwashing machine where designated employees can record the sanitizing concentration or sanitization temperature.
- Have the correct sanitizer test papers or heat sensitive tape available. Your chemical supplier or dishwasher maintenance company will have these items or know how to obtain them.
- Follow the correct procedure to clean food contact surfaces.

Handwashing Facilities that are supplied with soap and paper towels will allow food service employees to wash their hands correctly.

What to do:

- Good handwashing practices will reduce the risk of food contamination that may cause a foodborne illness outbreak.
- Hand soap and paper towels must be at each handwash sink.
- Review your hand washing policy with employees and frequently remind your staff to wash their hands to reduce food safety risk for your customers.
- Designate certain staff to check the supply of soap and paper towels at the handwash sinks.

Date Marking is required for all foods that require time/temperature control for safety (TCS) or are potentially hazardous. Seven days is the maximum number of days this type of food can be held in the refrigerator at 41°F or below.

What to do:

- Have a date marking system that employees understand.
- Be consistent in the application of your date marking system to prevent unsafe food from being served to a customer.
- Review the date marking rule in the Idaho Food Code 3-501.17. and 3-501.18.



Visit the CDHD website for posters and PDF-format forms that will be useful in your daily operations: <https://www.cdhd.idaho.gov/eh-food-foodsafetyresources.php>



Keeping Employees Healthy

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Use the cleaning and sanitizing agents specified for areas and follow the directions on the label. Contact the health department if you have any questions about sanitizers and disinfectants. Not all sanitizers and disinfectants are effective against norovirus.

Promote Hand Hygiene and Cough Etiquette

Post signs that tell workers, visitors, and clients the steps for proper hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Remember, using gloves is not a substitute for properly cleaning hands. Cough or sneeze into a tissue (with mouth and nose covered) and then wash hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.

Workers, visitors, and clients should have easy access to hand hygiene supplies like warm water and soap, disposable towels and no-touch wastebaskets.



Pets are Not Allowed In Food Establishments



This interesting topic needs awareness and attention because animals are prohibited in a food establishment.

Here at the health department, we regularly field calls from customers complaining about pets being brought into grocery stores and other food establishments.

What can a food establishment manager do to prevent the entry of pets in a food establishment?

Have a large, "can't miss" sign at the entrance before people with pets come into the store.

Service animals are allowed in a food establishment as described in the Idaho Food Code, 6-501.115. A "Service Animal" means an animal such as a guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability.

Allowed:

Patrol dogs accompanying police or security officers in offices and dining, sales, and storage areas, and sentry dogs running loose in outside areas.

A dog controlled by a person with a disability can be in areas that are not used for food preparation and open to customers, such as dining and sales areas.

Two Questions

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, there are two questions that can legally be asked by the establishment permittee of the person with the dog, if brought into the food establishment:

1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

For more information about service animals, visit this link to the Department of Justice's website: www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.pdf





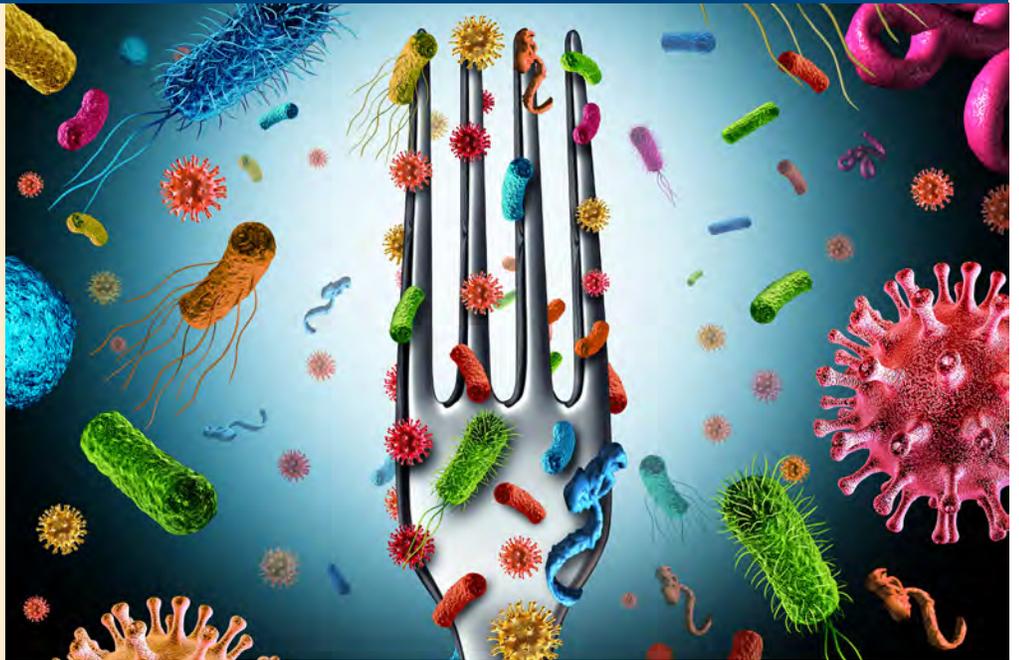
The Importance of Wearing Gloves

Glove wearing is essential while handling ready-to-eat foods and quite useful in helping to protect customers from potential foodborne illness. But using them properly is critical.

Studies have shown proper glove use helps prevent the spread of Norovirus and other harmful pathogens. Appropriate glove use starts with proper handwashing before donning gloves. Washing the gloves instead of your hands to save time is not an acceptable alternative. Blowing into the gloves to help open them is also unacceptable because it contaminates the gloves.

Proper glove use also includes regularly changing gloves when changing tasks, especially if they become soiled or torn, and after handling raw meat.

And always remember gloves are NOT to be used in place of handwashing. Gloves can be a great tool in your food establishment when used correctly. But remember, gloves, just like bare hands, can become easily contaminated.



Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) Foods

Some bacteria can grow and produce a toxin that will not break down when the product is re-heated to 165°F. The toxin will cause food poisoning. Or if harmful bacteria are allowed to grow rapidly and in significant numbers, foodborne illness is the result.

Pathogenic or harmful bacteria grow and multiply the fastest between 70°F and 125°F. Harmful bacteria that cause illness to patrons grow outside of this range but at a slower rate. This is why the danger zone is between 135°F and 41°F. Temperature control for food safety is a major risk factor and keeping harmful (pathogenic) bacteria from growing will reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Harmful bacteria can grow rapidly in cooked meat, poultry, gravy, soup, chili, stews and other food when it is not cooled to 41° F quickly.

The parameters for rapid cooling of cooked food is 135°F to 70°F within two hours and then 70°F to 41°F within the next four hours.

Do you monitor the temperature of food that must be cooled from 135°F to 70°F within two hours? Food must be discarded if is not cooled rapidly as explained above.

Having a rapid cooling method that works, and monitoring the cooling process are critical to prevent the rapid growth of harmful bacteria that may cause foodborne illness.

A Standard Operating Procedure for rapid cooling of TCS food is a training tool that can help food service workers reduce the risk of foodborne illness in a food establishment.



COOLING TIPS

- Keep lids off product until cooling is complete
- Break large volumes of product into smaller shallow pans
- Utilize ice baths or ice wands
- Stir product frequently
- Do not stack hot products
- Use thermometer
- Record cooling temperatures hourly on cooling log



Central District Health Department

Environmental Health
707 N. Armstrong Pl.
Boise, ID 83704-0825

Upcoming Food Safety Trainings

Idaho Food Safety & Sanitation Course

4-hour classroom format
8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Cost: \$49 per student

- Wed., January 17
- Wed., March 14
- Wed., May 16
- Wed., July 18
- Tues., September 18
- Wed., November 14

ServSafe® Manager Certification

8-hour classroom format
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Cost: \$125 per student

- Wed., January 10
- Tues., January 23
- Wed., February 7
- Tues., March 6
- Tues., March 20
- Wed., April 4
- Wed., May 9
- Tues., May 22
- Tues., June 5

Location for both courses:

In Ada County –
Central District Health Department
707 N. Armstrong Pl., Boise

*With 10 or more students, we will
travel to Boise, Elmore and Valley
counties by appointment.*

TO REGISTER: Call CDHD's Environmental Health Department at 208-327-7499