



ABOUT FOOD HYGIENE & FOOD POISONING

AIM OF THIS MODULE

Our first module explains what “food hygiene” actually means and takes a look at the high price we all pay if we get it wrong! We’ll also look at food poisoning and how it’s caused and show you how efforts to reduce the number of reported cases are failing badly.

What Should I Know?

By the end of this module you should be able to:-

- Say what “food hygiene” means;
- Explain the costs to customers, business and staff of poor standards of food hygiene;
- Understand that as a food handler, you can make the difference!
- Give examples of food poisoning bacteria and their sources;
- Describe how (and suggest why) the number of reported cases have changed over the last 15 years.

INTRODUCTION

We all want the food we eat to be tasty, nutritious and above all SAFE. In much the same way, your customers demand that the food you sell:-

- Will not make anybody ill or cause them harm;
- Is of excellent quality;
- Does not contain anything unwanted or unexpected – like hair or flies, etc.

Food safety doesn’t happen by accident – it takes a lot of care, high standards and hygienic practices by everyone working throughout the food industry, from the farms where food is produced to the supermarkets, shops and restaurants where food is finally sold and eaten by consumers.

1. Codename: Know What I Mean?

You should never forget that safe food is crucial to your business and everyone who handles food has their own important part to play. Remember it is YOU, the food handler, that makes the difference - don't be the one to let the high standards slip.

WHAT IS FOOD HYGIENE?

Food hygiene is concerned with all of the measures and good practices needed to make sure that food is safe and wholesome.



Exercise

Think about the place where you work. What signs might your customers look for in deciding whether you have high standards of food hygiene and safe food?



What do your customers look for?

We've given you one idea to get you started.

Customers might look at the temperature that food is stored in our fridge

.....
.....
.....

What part do you play in making sure that customers are happy with your hygiene standards?

.....
.....
.....



Write your answers in 'Know What I Mean? Answers'

THE COSTS OF POOR FOOD HYGIENE

Recent food poisoning outbreaks and food scares have shown us how devastating the effects can be on people, business and society.

Just look at the facts below if you're not convinced!

- Approximately 60 people DIE from food poisoning each year.
- The BSE scare has cost the economy a massive £1 Billion - that's nearly £20 for every man, woman and child in the country!
- Individuals breaking food safety laws face fines of up to £20,000 and/or 2 years in prison.
- Recent estimates show that it costs the NHS almost £30 million a year to care for patients admitted to hospital with food borne illness - just a small fraction of the total estimated cost to the country of between £500 and £1000 million!



Exercise

Consider what might happen if a food poisoning outbreak were to occur as a result of customers eating contaminated food from the place where you work. What would be the effect on the customers and their families? How might it affect business and members of staff ?

We've given you a few thoughts, but see if you can add some of your own ideas by filling in the spaces below.

CUSTOMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Affected customers will become ill

.....

.....

.....

BUSINESS

The business could be prosecuted by an Environmental Health Officer

.....

.....

.....

STAFF

Staff morale might be affected, especially those who actually caused the outbreak

.....

.....



Write your answers in 'Know What I Mean? Answers'

WHAT IS FOOD POISONING?

Food poisoning is a severe, unpleasant illness, caused by eating food that contains poisons or toxins which shouldn't be there.

You might already know that eating food contaminated with harmful bacteria (“germs” or “bugs”) is the main cause of food poisoning, but did you know that it can also be caused by.....

- Viruses, which are tiny living particles that invade the cells in our body. They are found particularly in seafood (like raw oysters) collected from sewage polluted waters - you can see why it's so important to make sure our supplies only come from clean seas!



Seafood MUST come from clean waters.

- Poisonous plants and fish. For example, raw or undercooked red kidney beans (not the ones in tins, as they've already been cooked!) can contain a natural poison which can make people ill if eaten.
- Some metals like aluminium, tin and lead can contaminate food and cause food poisoning if eaten in high enough levels.
- Chemicals can also contaminate food. They can include cleaning products, insecticides, and even food preservatives. In one recent case, a butcher accidentally poisoned his three sons by putting 100 times the legal level of preservatives into sausage meat!

The Symptoms of Food Poisoning

Many of us will have personal experience of food poisoning, either having suffered ourselves or knowing friends or family who have.

Illness normally starts 12-36 hours after eating contaminated food, but it can be as little as 1 hour or as long as 70 days! This can often make it very difficult to investigate which food has actually caused the illness.

When we eat contaminated food, our natural defence systems react by trying to get rid of toxins and bacteria from our bodies.

Exercise

Fill in the blank spaces from the list of words below.

VOMITING NAUSEA RUNS STOMACH TEMPERATURE

The NORMAL symptoms of food poisoning include:-

- Diarrhoea - or the.....;
- Ache;
-, - or being sick;
- Fever - or a high.....;
-, or feeling sick.

Write your answers in 'Know What I Mean? Answers'

Normally, food poisoning is not life threatening and most healthy adults recover in 1-7 days.

But, there are some groups of people who can be particularly vulnerable and food poisoning can make them very ill indeed or even result in death.



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Exercise



What sort of people do you think might fall into these “high risk groups”? We’ve given you an answer to help you on your way.

People whose body defences are weak because of other illnesses.

.....
.....
.....



Write your answers in ‘Know What I Mean? Answers’

Remember, food isn’t just eaten by healthy adults - it’s eaten by everyone, including the vulnerable and in some cases, your actions could make the difference between life and death!

FOOD POISONING BACTERIA

We now know that bacteria are the MAIN cause of food poisoning.

There are a number of different types of food poisoning bacteria, often linked with particular foods or sources.



Exercise

Look at the statements below and try to fill in the missing words from the list.

DIARRHOEA, EGGS, SOIL, BEEF, *E.coli*, TOXINS, SKIN, BOILS

Raw poultry....., raw meat and faeces are common sources of Salmonella bacteria. They can cause food poisoning which lasts between 1 and 7 days.

.....has been responsible for recent outbreaks which have resulted in a number of deaths. Human sewage and raw meat, especially mincedare the main source of these bacteria.

Staphylococcus aureus bacteria produce.....in food which make us ill. We (humans) carry the bacteria in our nose,, hair, mouth and

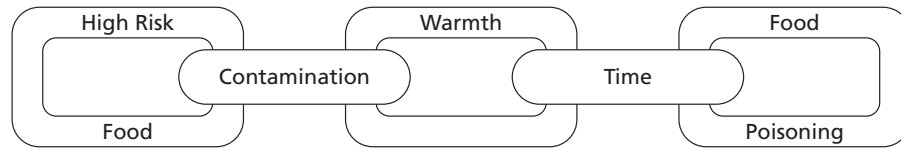


Clostridium perfringens can cause stomach ache and.....lasting 12-48 hours. Raw meat, dust and.....are common sources of these bacteria.

Write your answers in ‘Know What I Mean? Answers’

HOW FOOD POISONING BACTERIA MAKE US ILL

Food poisoning happens when we eat “high risk” foods which have become contaminated with food poisoning bacteria and which are then allowed to multiply to high numbers in the food.



The Food Poisoning Chain

Some types of food poisoning bacteria produce toxins (poisons) in the actual food, while others make us ill by releasing toxins when the bacteria are in our bodies.

FOODBORNE DISEASES

Foodborne diseases are types of illnesses that can also be caused by eating food which is contaminated with bacteria and other types of micro-organisms (microscopic living things). But, they differ from *food poisoning* bacteria because:-

- Unlike food poisoning bacteria, they don't need to multiply in the food to make us ill.
- The food is only a “vehicle” for the infection and it can also be spread by water, animals and people because of poor personal hygiene.
- Relatively few micro-organisms are needed to make us ill.

Common foodborne diseases include Listeriosis, Dysentery and Cryptosporidiosis (caused by a type of micro-organism called a protozoan).

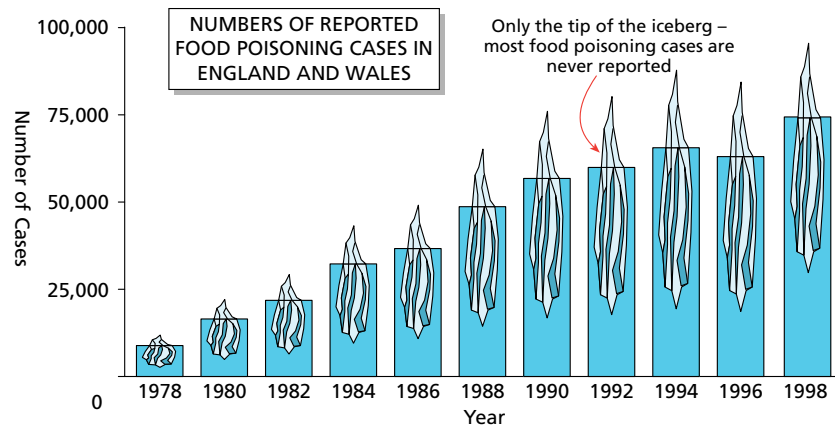
Did you know?

Most people have probably never heard of the bacteria called *Campylobacter*, which causes a foodborne illness more common than *Salmonella*! Eating undercooked poultry, drinking untreated milk and coming into contact with infected animals are thought to be the main ways that people become ill.

THE BAD NEWS

Despite better public awareness of food poisoning and improvements in technology, you might be surprised to know that the number of reported food poisoning cases has risen dramatically over the last 10 to 15 years. There are many possible reasons why reports of food poisoning have risen so quickly.

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- More take-away places to eat;
- More people eating chicken;
- Changes in farming - animals being housed closer together;
- Better awareness of food poisoning - more people reporting symptoms to the doctor.

In reality, this increase is probably due to a combination of many reasons, but what is certainly true is that the rise is real and very worrying.

THE GOOD NEWS

Food poisoning IS preventable. It's a question of good practice, following simple rules and applying what we will learn in this course to our everyday work.

But before you learn how to prevent food poisoning, it is important that you know a little more about our enemies - food poisoning bacteria.

WORDS OF WISDOM



After all, knowing your enemy is half the battle.

Key Points

Food Hygiene is crucial to your business – the costs of getting it wrong are very high.
Bacteria are the main cause of food poisoning.

The symptoms include sickness, diarrhoea and stomach ache.

Food poisoning happens when harmful bacteria multiply to high numbers in food.

They make us ill by producing toxins either in food or in our bodies.

LET'S FIND OUT SOME MORE ABOUT OUR ENEMY!



THE NEXT MODULE IS 'CODENAME: GERM WARFARE'