

RISK FACTORS & FOOD CODE INTERVENTIONS

Ensuring safe food is an important public health priority for everyone. In order to help improve food safety, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has identified the food preparation practices and behaviors (risk factors) that increase the chances of foodborne illness outbreaks.

Risk Factors: The risk factors in need of the greatest attention include:

- Improper holding times and temperatures
- Inadequate cooking
- Contaminated equipment
- Cross contamination
- Poor personal hygiene

Food Code Interventions: The Food Code addresses controls for these risk factors and establishes five (5) key public health interventions (actions) an operator can take to help decrease the chances of foodborne illness in order to protect consumer health. The five actions include:

1) Demonstration of Knowledge

The knowledge the person in charge applies to operating a food establishment in a sanitary manner and providing proper protection to food during the various stages of preparation.

2) Consumer Advisory

The operator provides information to the consumer regarding menu items of animal origin, which may be served raw or undercooked, and the hazard that this poses for especially vulnerable persons.

3) Employee Health

Managers and employees work together to prevent food from being contaminated by unhealthy food service workers.

4) Time-Temperature Controls

The operator uses appropriate times along with specified temperatures in the receiving, cooking, cooling, hot and cold holding and reheating of food.

5) Preventing Hands as a Vehicle of Contamination

All employees in the establishment practice thorough handwashing at all times with particular attention to finger nails and finger tips, and use of utensils and other means to avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.

Provide the necessary resources, equipment, and supplies. Items such as thermometers, chemical test strips, temperature logs, hand soap, hand drying devices and chemical sanitizers are crucial to the successful control of specific risk factors.

Establish monitoring procedures. Focus on critical processes and practices. Monitoring procedures will only be effective if employees are given the knowledge, skills and responsibility for food safety.

Operators must achieve active managerial control over the risk factors and adequately train employees in order to significantly reduce the risk of foodborne illness.