

food MATTERS

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The Importance of Handwashing

The most common cause of foodborne illness outbreaks in restaurants is food contaminated by germs on food service workers' hands. Proper handwashing can help prevent the spread of germs. All food service workers must carefully wash their hands often, including at the start of the work shift; before preparing and serving food; before putting on gloves; when changing tasks; after eating, drinking, coughing, smoking and using the restroom; and any other time that hands become dirty.

To wash hands properly:

- Use only sinks designated for handwashing.
- Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
- Lather your hands and forearms (up to your elbows). Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails.
- Scrub for at least 20 seconds.
- Rinse your hands thoroughly under running water.
- Dry your hands using paper towels or an automatic air dryer.
- Use a towel to turn off the water.



Designated sinks for handwashing only must:

- Have hot and cold running water.
- Be located in or next to employee restrooms.
- Be no more than 25 feet from food preparation, food service and warewashing areas.

You must post handwashing signs and place soap, paper towels or air dryers, and a trash can next to all sinks.

Outbreak Likely Caused by Contaminated Chicken Liver

OUTBREAK

The Health Department responded to multiple reports of diarrhea, stomach pain, fever and fatigue from customers who ate at the same Brooklyn restaurant. In its investigation, the Health Department identified 13 sick people, including five food service workers and five customers who tested positive for *Salmonella* and one customer who tested positive for *Campylobacter*. *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* are bacteria commonly found in eggs, meat and poultry. These foods can become contaminated when proper food safety practices are not followed. The Health Department found that an appetizer containing chicken liver was most likely the cause of illness at this restaurant.

The restaurant was closed by the Health Department until it was professionally cleaned and

the restaurant owners, chefs and managers successfully completed the Health Department's Food Protection Course in person and received a certificate of completion. The restaurant was also required to submit a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan for the appetizer containing chicken liver, and the plan was approved by the Health Department.

After its reopening, the restaurant was required to have at least two staff members with food protection certificates (FPCs) on duty during all hours of operation.

To prevent a *Salmonella* or *Campylobacter* outbreak:

- Cook poultry to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 15 seconds.

- Hold hot food at 140 degrees Fahrenheit or above.
- Wash hands, cutting boards, counters, knives and other utensils after touching uncooked foods.
- Wash hands before handling food, between handling different food items and after using the restroom.
- Wear gloves or use proper utensils to prevent bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep uncooked meats separate from produce, cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods. For example, in the refrigerator, store uncooked meat on a lower shelf than ready-to-eat and cooked food.
- Make sure that food workers who are sick stay home.

Letter Grading for Mobile Food Vendors

The Health Department now issues letter grades to mobile food carts and trucks. The new grading program will use a scoring system similar to the system used in restaurants: "A" grade issued for 0 to 13 sanitary violation points; "B" grade for 14 to 27 points; and "C" grade for 28 or more points. The letter grade will be posted on the permit decal on each cart and truck. The grading program will be rolled out over a two-year period, as mobile food vending permits are renewed and units get inspected.



How to Properly Store In-Use Utensils

Practice “A”-grade food safety by correctly storing in-use utensils such as serving spoons, ladles, tongs, spatulas and scoops. Once you use utensils to prepare or serve food or ice, they are considered in-use. In-use

utensils must be stored safely and cleaned regularly to stop the growth of bacteria.

Follow these guidelines when storing in-use serving utensils:

- Use long-handled utensils to avoid touching food with your bare hands.
- Use a separate utensil for each food item.
- When placing utensils in food containers, make sure the handles extend beyond the food.
- Keep utensils clean, dry and protected on a clean, sanitized food contact surface.
- If using a dipper well to store utensils, it must use continuous running water to remove food particles between uses.
- Store utensils in a container of water, maintained at 135 degrees Fahrenheit or above. Change the water every four hours, cleaning the container often to avoid food buildup.



Food Protection Course Now Offered in Bengali

Any restaurant that is receiving or preparing food, or is open to the public, must have a supervisor with a food protection certificate on duty. To get a food protection certificate, you must successfully complete the New York City Health Department’s Food Protection Course and pass the final examination given at the end of the course.

In addition to English, Spanish, Chinese and Korean, the in-classroom Food Protection Course is now offered in Bengali.

The in-person course is held at the Health Academy, located in the Riverside Health Center at 160 W. 100th St., Second Floor, New York, NY 10025. You can register online for the course at nyc.gov/healthacademy, or in person at one of these locations:

Citywide Licensing Center

42 Broadway
New York, NY 10004

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Wednesday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m

NYC Small Business Support Center

90-27 Sutphin Blvd., Fourth Floor
Jamaica, NY 11435

Hours: Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Food Safety Challenge

1. Which is not required for a handwashing sink?

- A. It must have hot and cold running water
- B. It must be stainless steel
- C. It must be located no more than 25 feet from food preparation areas
- D. It must be placed next to soap, paper towels or an air dryer, and a trash can

2. When cleaning and storing in-use utensils:

- A. Store utensils in a dipper well
- B. Use a separate utensil for each food item
- C. Use long-handled utensils to avoid bare-hand contact
- D. All of the above

3. Which of the following steps is not part of proper handwashing?

- A. Lather your arms up to your elbows
- B. Scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails
- C. Wash your hands before and after each task and after using the restroom
- D. Wash your hands in the same sink where dishes are washed

4. Which of the following practices helps to prevent a *Salmonella* outbreak?

- A. Make sure that food workers who are sick stay home
- B. Hold hot food at 140 degrees Fahrenheit or above
- C. Wash your hands often
- D. All of the above

5. *Salmonella* is commonly found in all EXCEPT:

- A. Bread
- B. Eggs
- C. Poultry
- D. Meat



Did You Know?

- 1) Renewing your permit online is easy. Go to nyc.gov/dohmhpermits. Registration is required. Payment is by credit or debit card only.
- 2) Interested in resources the City offers to businesses? Go to nyc.gov/business.
- 3) Settle a food service establishment violation. If you receive an offer of settlement, you may save money by accepting it. Visit nyc.gov/business and click on the Violations tab.
- 4) Your establishment will get fewer violations if more of your staff learn food safety practices. For more information about the food protection course, go to nyc.gov/healthacademy.
- 5) Need information about opening and operating a food service establishment in NYC? Visit nyc.gov/health/foodservice.