

Protecting food from contamination

Contamination of food from objects, people, pests or chemicals can cause serious illness. Food businesses, by law, must take precautions to avoid causing harm to people who eat their food.

Protecting food is important

It is a legal requirement that a food business, when receiving, storing, processing and displaying food, takes all practicable steps to protect food from the likelihood of contamination.

Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements* of the Food Standards Code sets out the specific requirements for food businesses.

During an inspection of a food business, an authorised officer from the NSW Food Authority or local council may identify issues that need to be rectified.

Business owners should speak to their local council environmental health officer (EHO) if they have any questions about the results of inspections, what work needs to be done and by when.

Common contaminants of food

- Juices from raw foods, such as meat and seafood
- Unclean surfaces, equipment and utensils
- Dirt, grease and unclean surfaces
- Bacteria and viruses from unwashed hands and poor personal hygiene
- Pests and pest droppings
- Cleaning and other chemicals
- Jewellery, hair and personal items
- Glass, metal or other fragments from damaged equipment and fixtures.

Tips to protect food from contamination

It is the business owner's responsibility to set up food safety processes and procedures in the workplace to comply with the Food Standards Code.

Business owners and staff can follow some simple steps to protect food from contamination during the receipt, storage, processing and display of food:

- Store food in food-grade containers and covered, if necessary, to protect it from contamination.
- Store food and packaging above the floor.

- Store raw food – especially meat, fish and poultry – below and away from ready-to-eat food in a cool room or fridge.
- Store chemicals and equipment well away from food items, food packaging and food handling areas.
- Maintain the premises, including all fixtures, fittings and equipment, in a clean and undamaged condition.
- Regularly clean and sanitise food contact surfaces and utensils, such as chopping boards, knives.
- Use separate equipment and utensils for raw and ready-to-eat foods, or thoroughly wash and sanitise equipment and utensils between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with food, for example use utensils rather than bare hands.
- Thoroughly wash and dry hands before starting work, changing tasks or returning from a break, for example between serving customers and preparing food, and after handling raw foods and garbage, or using the toilet.
- Minimise the wearing of exposed jewellery and tie back long hair.
- Cover cuts and wounds with an appropriate dressing.
- Do not handle food if feeling unwell or suffering from a contagious illness.
- Store food in food-grade containers and covered.

More information

- Visit [foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](https://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- Email the Food Authority helpline at food.contact@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- Phone the Food Authority helpline on 1300 552 406.

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