

Food Preparation and Cross Contamination

This fact sheet aims to provide information on how cross contamination occurs and provides advice about practices that can prevent it.

How does cross contamination occur?

Cross contamination occurs when bacteria are transferred from one object to another, either by direct or indirect contact.

Common activities which result in cross contamination include:

- Not washing hands between handling different types of foods such as from meat to vegetables or fruit,
- Using the same knife and board to cut raw meat and ready to eat foods (salads, cooked quiche etc.),
- Defrosting food or placing dirty utensils and equipment in the hand wash basin,
- Storing food uncovered or on the floor of the fridge or cool room,
- Storing raw food above ready to eat food,
- Keeping cleaning chemicals next to dry and tinned foods,
- Re-using a cloth to wipe benches, cutlery and tables,
- Using a tea towel for drying equipment, utensils or hands after washing,
- Not washing fruits and vegetables to remove soil and other residues.

Why is cross contamination a problem?

Cross contamination can cause food poisoning when bacteria are transferred on to food that is ready to eat. For example, if raw meat comes into contact with cooked chicken on a sandwich, the customer will consume the bacteria found on raw meat.

How do I prevent cross contamination?

Cross contamination may occur in many ways, but just a few simple steps will help you prevent it from occurring in your food business.

These include:

- Using separate utensils or thoroughly washing and sanitising utensils and food contact surfaces between handling raw and ready to eat foods,
- Keep food covered and off the floor during storage,
- Maintain the temperature of refrigerators and cold rooms below 5°C to prevent bacteria from growing on food,
- Avoid any unnecessary contact with food,
- Store raw foods, especially meat, fish and poultry, on the bottom shelf of the fridge or cold room to prevent raw meat juices dripping onto ready-to-eat foods,
- Keep cleaning chemicals and other non-food items stored away from food items,
- Regularly change, or wash and sanitise, cloths used for wiping benches, tables or other equipment,
- Never use cloths used for cleaning toilets or similar areas for cleaning anything that may come in contact with food,
- Let equipment and utensils air dry after washing and sanitising,
- Always wash and thoroughly dry your hands with disposable paper towels when changing tasks, starting work or returning from a break (including a cigarette or toilet break).

MORE INFORMATION & CONTACTING COUNCIL

If you require any further information about this or any other Food issue, please call Council's Customer Service Centre on 1300 878 001 or visit the Townsville City Council website www.townsville.qld.gov.au

