

VINELAND'S

FOOD SAFETY NEWSLETTER

February 2012

Produced by the Vineland Health Department- May be copied!



Interesting Facts on Norovirus

Norovirus or the “stomach flu” is highly contagious. It can wreak havoc in your business should an employee bring it into your establishment. Symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting and low-grade fever. Here are some interesting facts about this very common virus:

- Norovirus is more common in winter or late fall because sunlight kills it.
- Norovirus will survive 20 minutes to 4 hours on our hands, 5 days on surfaces in cooler temperatures and up to 1 year in bottled water stored in the dark.
- The number of viral particles needed to make a healthy person ill is 1 to 10.
- You do not get all of the Norovirus off your hands after 20 seconds of washing if you have an active case of it.
- A contaminated finger will spread Norovirus to 7 consecutive things touched.
- A finger that picks up Norovirus from a surface can then pass it on to 4 more surfaces.
- Detergent cleaning alone only spreads Norovirus around. The right sanitizer is needed to kill it. Go to www.vldhealth.org for a list of appropriate sanitizers.
- One episode of diarrhea produces 1 trillion viral particles. One vomit episode produces 30 million.
- We become ill with Norovirus by either eating or inhaling the virus particles.
- Disinfecting restrooms with the right sanitizer routinely is an important part of controlling the spread of Norovirus. Equally important is sending ill employees home.
- Up to 30% of people can have an active case of Norovirus without symptoms.

• Did you know...?



- A free on-line food safety exam is at <http://www.americanfoodsafety.com/afsexam.htm>. Good for practice- no certificate.
- **Brown rice** is much harder to acidify for sushi than white rice. Special approval must be given by the health department when acidifying brown rice.
- If you fresh squeeze juice and plan to serve it to a highly susceptible population, you must first obtain approval from this department. A HACCP plan must be submitted to obtain approval. A highly susceptible population, for this issue, includes children up to age 9.
- 30 to 80% of **raw chicken** tested positive for Campylobacter bacteria. Cooking to 165°F in all parts will kill these bacteria.
- **Cucumbers, apples, and other produce** are coated with a small amount of wax. This wax replaces the natural coatings that are removed when the produce is washed. These waxes are not harmful.
- The best way to keep disease causing bacteria out of your **produce** is to rinse it with warmer water before you cut it. A fresh cut and colder water may allow bacteria to be drawn into the produce during rinsing. This is especially important if you are not going to cook the product.



Food Safety Training Available!

What are you waiting for?

Vineland Health Department:

Intended students: Anyone working with food, especially prep people. At least one person in charge from a Risk Type 2 Facility must have this course or similar by January 2, 2011.

Class focus: The causes of foodborne illness/ how to protect your establishment from an outbreak.

Instructors: Jeanne Garbarino (English) and Emma Lopez (for Spanish class only)

Certificate: Upon successful completion of course. Certificate is valid for 3 years.

Cost: \$ 15.00 for each person or 3 persons from the same establishment for \$30

Location: Vineland- Please see enclosed schedule.

Dates: Please see the enclosed schedule. *Note: 6 hours of class must be attended to receive a certificate. This class does not count towards the State training requirement for Risk Type 3 Facilities. To find your risk type, look at your most recent report, license or call this office. For a current list of the classes available and required for Risk Type 3 Facilities, go to www.vldhealth.org.*

HOW TO REGISTER

To register, return the enclosed application to the address listed with the appropriate fee. For more information, please call Jeanne Garbarino at 794-4000 extension 4326. Confirmation and directions will be sent upon registering.

Outbreaks of Interest

In March of 2011, a bakery in Massachusetts caused an outbreak of **Salmonella** where 75 people became ill and 2 died. The type of Salmonella indicated it came from raw whole shell eggs. The most likely problem was identified as: cooked pastry shells were stored in egg crates that were contaminated with the Salmonella bacteria. Other problems were noted as gallons of filling left unrefrigerated for hours; no soap or paper towels were provided at the hand sinks; and calzones filled with deli meats and cheeses were left unrefrigerated.

In the summer of 2011, more than 4,000 people became ill with **E. coli** after consuming contaminated sprouts in Europe that were not cooked. Over 40 people died. More than 800 of those ill suffered from HUS, enduring brain and kidney complications that will likely afflict them for the rest of their lives. The sprouts were grown at an organic farm in Germany. Unless the sprouts are irradiated or adequately cooked, there is no way to guarantee the safety of any sprouts. Since 1988, at least 55 outbreaks have occurred worldwide related to raw sprouts. CDC warned consumers in 1999 about the risk of eating uncooked sprouts.

Food for Thought

By Alfred Verderose, City Solicitor



In 2011, an estimated 3,037 deaths, 128,000 hospitalizations and 48 million illnesses were caused by contaminated food in the United States. It has been estimated that the economic impact of foodborne illness across the nation to be \$152 billion annually. A foodborne illness is any illness resulting from the consumption of contaminated food, pathogenic bacteria, viruses, or parasites that contaminate food.

The impact on a local retail food establishment providing contaminated food can be devastating. At a minimum, the retail food establishment's insurance costs will go up; their reputation tarnished resulting in a loss of business and the potential for financial insolvency and/or bankruptcy. It is therefore important that all sellers of food products have a basic understanding of the New Jersey Products Liability Law.¹

Liability and responsibility for injuries and illnesses caused by any products in New Jersey are governed by the Products Liability Act. A product liability action is a legal claim or action for harm caused by a defective product. Harm is defined by the Act to include "injuries and illness."² A product seller is any person who in the course of a business conducted for that purpose sells, distributes, leases, installs, markets, repairs, or otherwise is involved in placing a product in the stream of commerce."³ This would include a retail food establishment on Landis Avenue, as well as General Motors.

Under the Products Liability Law, a retail food establishment is responsible for any illness or injury caused by a food item which is not reasonably fit, suitable or safe for its intended purpose. This would include food products purchased by the retail food establishment from a private home or any other unapproved food vendor. Foodborne illnesses caused by contaminated produce or other foods may give rise to a products liability action.

The law provides limited protection to the retail food establishment. If the merchant can correctly identify an approved source of the contaminated food; the retail food establishment will be relieved of liability. This protection, however, is qualified and does not apply if the manufacturer/grower has no known agents, facility, or other presence within the United States; or has no attachable asset; or has been adjudicated bankrupt. In other words, if there is no reasonable prospect of collecting a judgment against the manufacturer/grower. In addition, a retail food establishment is liable if the merchant knew or should have known the food was contaminated or if the merchant caused the contamination. In that instance, the retail food establishment may be subject to general and punitive damages. There also may be liability if the retail food establishment packages or repackages a food product, or altered it in some significant way.

It is important for a retail food establishment to keep detailed records of the source of the food it purchases and to remove from sale any food products which the merchant suspects to be contaminated. In the case of food products purchased from overseas, it is important for the merchant to pay attention to the quality of the manufacturer/grower, especially in the case of fresh produce, unpackaged and/or prepared foods. The retail food establishment must take steps to assure that the merchant has not caused the contamination.

In any products liability case, the claimant must prove that the food item was defective and caused his or her illness. This is not always easy, and in fact it has been estimated that 80% to 90% of the claims fail for lack of proof. In the case of an isolated incident, it may be difficult to establish the source of the contamination, in which case the retail food establishment may bear the liability, or at least the cost of defending the action. In the case of a widespread outbreak, caused by a common strain, the source will probably be readily identified, liability passed down stream to the manufacturer and /or grower, subject to the exceptions noted above.

¹ NJSA §2A:58 C-1 et seq

² NJSA §2A:58 C-1(b)(2)

³ NJSA §2A:58 C8



TEST YOUR FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE!



You have been around food all of your life. You may have worked with food for many years, but do you really know what can go wrong and how to keep your food safe? Take this quiz and see!

- 1) If you make cream cheese icing, how do you know if it can be safely stored at room temperature?
 - a) It is always safe to store at room temperature. Cream cheese doesn't go bad quickly.
 - b) Store it at room temperature for a maximum of 7 days
 - c) Have a food lab test it for pH and water activity before storing it at room temperature.
- 2) Where should chemicals be stored in a retail food establishment?
 - a) Below or away from foods and single-service items
 - b) At least 2" away from food on the same shelf.
 - c) Above foods or single-service items
- 3) What is the minimum temperature required for all cold holding of potentially hazardous food?
 - a) 41 °F
 - b) 45° F
 - c) 48° F
- 4) Does repackaged cream cheese require a date marking on it?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
- 5) If an employee is diagnosed with certain foodborne illnesses, the person in charge must ensure that the affected employee does not work with food or food-contact surfaces. These illnesses are
 - a) Salmonellosis and Shigellosis
 - b) Hepatitis A and E. coli
 - c) Staphylococcal intoxication
 - d) All of the above

ANSWERS:

1. c. The only way to know for sure is to have the product tested. FDA has a chart that will tell if it is potentially hazardous with use of the pH and the water activity. Call your Health Inspector and have them look it up for you. Save the lab results.
2. a. Chemicals can potentially contaminate foods and single-service items and cause illness in your customers. Store chemicals in identified containers and away from food and any containers that will hold food.
3. a. The new State law came into effect on January 2, 2012. All potentially hazardous food must be held at 41° F or less at all times! This law is in response to the ability of Listeria growing at very cold temperatures.
4. a. It will require date marking unless the manufacturer can give you a letter stating that their cream cheese is acidified and will not grow Listeria. Only then is no date marking acceptable.
5. d. These illnesses are the "big 5" to be concerned about with your foodhandlers and dishwashers. They can easily be transmitted to your customers and you will be held legally accountable. Ask for clearance from a doctor before allowing them to return to work.