

Control of Norovirus illness in hospitality/leisure settings

You may not be able to control infection being brought into your premises but it is your responsibility to ensure that you are able to control its spread amongst your customers.

- 1.** Food business operators must prevent any person from working in food handling areas in any capacity if they are likely to contaminate food with harmful bacteria or viruses. This may include chefs, kitchen porters, waiting staff, cleaners etc. If these people are suspected to be carrying a disease that may be transmitted through food (eg because they have diarrhoea and/or vomiting) they must be excluded from food related duties.
- 2.** Food handlers and other staff carrying out low-risk activities eg bar work, washing-up, waiting tables etc. are required by law to notify their supervisor if they suffer certain symptoms relating to gastro-intestinal illness. This duty needs to be brought to the attention of your employees to ensure that they report any significant symptoms to you. From this information you will need to make an assessment as to whether to allow them to work at the premises within 48 hours (current guidance) of suffering such symptoms.
- 3.** The precautions for controlling viruses are different from bacteriological food related illness ie viral contamination of food will not be controlled by refrigerated storage or separating raw foods from ready to eat foods.
- 4.** Good personal hygiene will assist in preventing the spread of infection between people and reduce the likelihood of the food becoming contaminated in the event of an outbreak of gastro-intestinal illness.
- 5.** Appropriate training, supervision and facilities which incorporate liquid soap and single use towels and even non-hand operable taps will assist people to adopt good personal hygiene standards at work. Alcohol hand sanitising gels cannot be relied on to control Norovirus.

6. To prevent any illnesses spreading, you must consider what measures should be taken when a food handler reports symptoms of gastro-intestinal illness to you. The procedure may need to include:
 - enhanced cleaning
 - cooking of food that has been handled by anyone who later has symptoms
 - reheating, until it is piping hot, food that has been handled by anyone who later has symptoms and
 - checking whether other people who have been in contact with your staff (eg family and friends) have had similar symptoms which might indicate an infection.
7. Enhanced cleaning should include the use of detergent and hot water followed by a 0.1% solution of a chlorine releasing agent such as sodium hypochlorite eg household bleach. Soft furnishings may be steam cleaned.
8. Any vomiting must be cleaned up promptly to reduce environmental contamination and prevent persistent transmission of infection. Fresh vomit should be covered with paper immediately. Whilst clearing it away staff should wear personal protective clothing, including face protection, to limit the risk of infection.
9. It is recommended that food handlers do not use the toilets used by your customers as you have little control over whether the customer may be suffering from gastro-intestinal illness which might contaminate hand contact surfaces.

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