

How to?



18) Address food poisoning complaints

Why is this important?

Allegations of food poisoning must always be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, even when it is suspected that the allegations are groundless. A procedure should be followed to ensure that a sufficient amount of information is identified which will allow for a complete and thorough investigation.

What to do

Always take all complaints seriously and it is important these complaints are dealt with promptly as they are often of a sensitive nature.

Do not at any time admit liability, but be sympathetic and courteous and ensure the customer knows you are taking the matter very seriously.

Record all relevant details from the complainant, such as the name, address telephone number, all food eaten, date and time of food consumed, onset of illness, symptoms and duration of illness, any other family/group members affected and any other comment.

Recommend that the complainant and any other affected person, should report to their GP and advise that the investigation may take up to 3 weeks to complete.

Keep complainant informed.

Once the investigation is completed, observations and actions will be passed to the manager to action.

Keep complainant informed of findings and actions taken.

It is possible that a local Environmental Health Officer will conduct their own investigation. Ensure you cooperate with the investigating officer at all time.

If they can identify the cause of the food poisoning, remove any related foodstuffs or foods from the same batch to a separate storage area, and hold them until they receive further instructions.

The food item must be clearly labelled – **‘Not for Consumption’**.

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Check your understanding by

What relevant details should be collected from the complainant in order to assist with an investigation?

Who could you refer the complainant to for further assistance?

If a suspected food is identified as a the likely cause of the issue, how should a sample be labelled?

What role could an Environmental Health Officer play in an investigation?

You can tell if it's correct:

Food complaints are dealt with in a professional and courteous manner.

Suspected foods are kept in a safe location, away from other foods and are labelled as "Not for consumption".

The complainant knows at all times about the progress of any investigation and is kept informed of relevant findings and actions taken.

Hints and tips

After an alleged incident / outbreak, ensure all team members are trained and are aware of the basic principles of food hygiene, such as avoiding cross contamination, hand washing and cooling foods correctly.

Ensure team members are aware of responsibilities with regards to confidentiality during an investigation.

Ensure complete cooperation with bodies such as Environmental Health Officers.