

FW/02: Reporting of vomiting and/or diarrhoea

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Any food handler, other employee and/or visitor suffering from symptoms of any illness or condition likely to directly or indirectly be transmitted through food or to give rise to food poisoning or food-borne illness must be **excluded** from food handling duties and/or from entering food handling areas.

2.0 Managers' responsibilities for *Food handlers*

2.1 Upon recruitment and on an annual basis thereafter must complete and sign-off a copy of **FW04: Infection reporting requirements for food handlers**, the copy of which must be kept at unit-level.

2.2 Upon notification and/or showing symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting food handlers must be excluded from food handling duties and denied access to food handling areas with immediate effect and until symptom-free for a minimum period of 48 hours.

2.3 Where a direct family member or close personal contact of a food handler is showing symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting that they are instructed on the need for high standards of personal hygiene and effective hand washing whilst at work.

2.4 With reference to (2.3) food handlers are expected to undertake normal food-handling duties whilst they themselves do not show any such symptoms. However, if symptoms do manifest themselves then the food handler must be excluded from food handling and food handling areas with immediate effect.

2.5 Those food handlers who have disregard for the requirements of this procedure and/or their legal obligations under the appropriate food safety legislation are taken through the departmental disciplinary procedure.

3.0 Managers' responsibilities for non-food handlers

3.1 Maintenance staff and contractors prior to entering food premises and/or attempting to undertake duties, and on an annual basis from thereon must have completed the appropriate form. Refer to **FW/07: Maintenance staff and contractors in food preparation areas**.

3.2 All visitors and non-catering staff prior to entering food premises and/or attempting to undertake duties must complete the appropriate form. Refer to **FW/08: Visitors questionnaire**.

3.3 All non-food handlers that are infectious or potentially infectious must be excluded from food handling areas.

4.0 Food handler's responsibilities

4.1 Food handlers are legally obliged to advise their manager if they know or suspect they are suffering from, or are a carrier of, a food-borne illness, for example, if they have diarrhoea and/or vomiting or because of close contact with a confirmed case.

4.2 If suffering from symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting must report with immediate effect to their line manager and then leave the premise straight away.

4.3 If symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting develop during their working hours must inform their line manager with immediate effect and then leave the food premise straight away.

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- 4.4 If they have shown symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting whilst being in a foreign country or developing them on their return must report it to their line manager and under no circumstances must they attempt to undertake food-handling duties.
- 4.5 If a food handler undertakes food-handling duties knowing that they are showing symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting they will be committing an offence under current EU food safety legislation.
- 4.6 Prior to 'return-to-work' following illness which included vomiting and/or diarrhoea a food handler must be symptom-free for a minimum of 48 hours.
- 4.7 If an affected person has visited a General Practitioner due to ongoing and persistent vomiting and/or diarrhoea then that food handler must not attempt to undertake food-handling duties until formal confirmation has been received from the doctor that they are fit to return to work.
- 5.0 Assessment**
- 5.1 Upon notification that a food handler is in contact with a direct family member/s or close personal contact/s who are showing symptoms of vomiting and/or diarrhoea it will be the responsibility of the immediate line manager to formally assess the situation.
- 5.2 The assessment must identify any risk involved in any of the working procedures normally undertaken by the food handler (this would normally include; good hygiene practice and the regular and effective washing of hands).
- 4.3 If the assessment identifies a risk that cannot be controlled then the food handler must be excluded from food-handling duties and given appropriate safe alternative duties until those family members/close contacts have been symptom-free for 48 hours.
- 6.0 Requirements for return to work**
- 6.1 Requirements for return to work following illness due to gastro-intestinal infection will be as set out in the publication **Food Handlers *Fitness to Work* Regulatory Guidance and Best Practice Advice for Food Business Operators**.
- 6.2 Food handlers are allowed to resume food-handling duties once:
- a) there has been no vomiting for 48 hours once any treatment has ceased
 - b) the bowel habit has returned to normal for 48 hours either spontaneously or on cessation of treatment of anti-diarrhoeal drugs (*e.g. if the last symptom ended at 5pm on Monday evening then the food handler can safely return to work at 5pm on Wednesday evening*)
 - c) good hygiene practice, particularly hand washing is observed in all circumstances
- 6.3 If on returning to work following a period of absence, having suffered from vomiting and/or diarrhoea the food handler must notify their line manager that they are fit to resume work.
- 7.0 Return to work interview**
- 7.1 Following a period of absence involving diarrhoea and/or vomiting all food handlers must attend a 'return-to-work' interview with their line manager and in any event prior to engaging in food-handling activities.

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8.0 When the cause of infection is known

- 8.1 If a food handler has been diagnosed by a General Practitioner with an infection listed in this section then procedures and guidance in this document can normally be applied:
- *Salmonella* (excluding *Salmonella* Typhi and *Salmonella* Paratyphi A, B or C)
 - *Campylobacter*
 - *Vibrio* (excluding *Vibrio cholera* O1 and O139)
 - *Yersinia*
 - *Bacillus*
 - *Staphylococcus aureus*
 - *Clostridium perfringens*
 - Protozoa (e.g. *Cryptosporidium*, *Giardia lamblia*) with the exception of *Entamoeba histolytica*
 - *Shigella sonnei* (but not *Shigella dysenteriae*, *flexneri* and *boydii*)
 - Worms (excluding Threadworm and *Taenia solium*)
- 8.2 If a food handler is diagnosed by a General Practitioner with an infection listed from hereon then alternative action may well be required.
- 8.3 *Salmonella* Typhi and *Salmonella* Paratyphi A, B or C (Enteric fever); must be excluded from work and referred to a medical professional. Investigation and management of the case must be referred to the local authority, health professionals and the Health Protection Agency. Confirmed cases can be excluded for three months or more.
- 8.4 Verocytotoxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli* O157); confirmed cases must remain excluded until medical clearance is obtained. Clearance for work normally involves two consecutive, negative, faecal samples submitted, with the second sample taken 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped naturally. Anyone who has household contact with someone infected with *E. coli* O157 must inform their manager. They must be excluded from any work that involves direct handling or serving open ready to eat foods until microbiological clearance is obtained in the same way.
- 8.4 *Entamoeba histolytica* (Amoebic dysentery); in addition to the normal 48 hour exclusion, food handlers must seek medical clearance. Clearance for work normally involves a single negative stool sample taken one week after the end of treatment
- 8.5 Threadworm; exclude from direct handling and serving of open ready-to-eat foods until infected person is treated.
- 8.6 *Taenia solium*; exclude from direct handling and serving of open ready-to-eat foods. Clearance for work would normally require two negative stool tests at 1 and 2 weeks post treatment. Exclude from all food handling duties and areas also if managers are not confident in their personal hygiene practices.
- 8.7 *Vibrio cholerae* O1 and O139; in addition to the normal 48 hour exclusion, people handling and serving open ready to eat foods. Clearance for work normally involves two consecutive negative stool samples taken at intervals of at least 24 hours.

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9.0 Non-infective gastrointestinal disorders

9.1 Diarrhoea and/or vomiting is not only caused by infection but can be the result of:

- morning sickness during pregnancy;
- side effects of medicines and medical treatment;
- inflammation of the bowel including disorders such as, diverticulitis, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis or Irritable Bowel Syndrome;
- malabsorption syndromes such as, coeliac disease and cystic fibrosis; and
- dietary indiscretion, for example the consumption of excess alcohol and/or spicy food

NB: the afore-mentioned conditions are not necessarily a barrier to exclusion even though they may result in diarrhoea; however, the regular and effective washing of hands must be practiced.

9.2 Food handlers' who do suffer with such ailments must be made aware of the importance in seeking medical advice and informing their manager if any change from their normal bowel habit occurs, as this must be assumed to be infectious until proven otherwise.

9.3 If there is an element of doubt managers must err on the side of caution and exclude affected persons until evidence shows that it is safe for them to return.

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