

E. coli cross-contamination guidance

How to control and reduce the risk of E. coli O157 cross-contamination in your business.

IMPORTANT

EU references in FSA guidance documents

The FSA is updating all EU references, to accurately reflect the law now in force, in all new or amended guidance published since the 'Transition Period' ended at the end of 2020. In some circumstances it may not always be practicable for us to have all EU references updated at the point we publish new or amended guidance.

Other than in Northern Ireland, any references to EU Regulations in this guidance should be read as meaning retained EU law. You can access retained EU law via HM Government's [EU Exit Web Archive](#). This should be read alongside any EU Exit legislation that was made to ensure retained EU law operates correctly in a UK context. EU Exit legislation is on [legislation.gov.uk](#).

In Northern Ireland, EU law will continue to apply in respect to the majority of food and feed hygiene and safety law, as listed in the [Northern Ireland Protocol](#), and retained EU law will not apply to Northern Ireland in these circumstances.

This guide helps businesses comply with food hygiene legislation and gives advice on good practice. It focuses on E. coli but the steps taken to avoid cross-contamination will also help control other harmful bacteria.

[View E. coli cross-contamination as PDF](#) (3.48 MB)

Preventing contamination

Businesses must ensure that work areas, surfaces and equipment used for raw and ready-to-eat food are adequately separated.

This can be done by separating raw and ready-to-eat food in separate:

- rooms, staff, utensils and equipment

- areas, staff, utensils and equipment

If this is not possible then you can clean and disinfect areas that are used for both raw and ready-to-eat food. This method carries the most risk and you must follow specific legal requirements to ensure that food is safe.

Equipment

Complex equipment such as vacuum packing machines, slicers and mincers shouldn't be used for both raw and ready-to-eat food during a normal business day.

If you are changing the use of the machine from raw to ready-to-eat foods, the machines need to be dismantled and all surfaces cleaned and effectively disinfected.

This guide gives further information about the use of complex equipment. There is a separate guide for re-commissioning vacuum packers.

[View Guidelines for re-commissioning vacuum packers as PDF](#) (77.02 KB)

Personal hygiene

Staff must wash hands using a recognised technique. Anti-bacterial hand gels must not be used to replace handwashing but can be used following handwashing as an additional level of protection.

Gloves are not a substitute for effective handwashing. If gloves are used, they should be changed as often as you should wash hands and you must wash your hands when changing or removing gloves.

Disinfection

If you are using a chemical disinfectant or sanitiser, these must meet officially recognised standards and should be used as instructed by the manufacturer.

More information about the standards disinfectants and sanitisers must meet and how to use them effectively are in this guide.

Supporting documents

[View E. coli O157 cross-contamination for caterers as PDF](#) (482.8 KB)