

E. coli cross-contamination guidance

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

References to EU legislation in FSA guidance

Directly applicable EU legislation no longer applies in GB. EU legislation retained when the UK exited the EU became assimilated law on 1 January 2024, published on legislation.gov.uk. References to any legislation in FSA guidance with 'EU' or 'EC' in the title (e.g. Regulation (EC) 178/2002) should now be regarded as assimilated law where applicable to GB. References to 'Retained EU Law' or 'REUL' should now be regarded as references to assimilated law.

For businesses moving goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, information on [the Windsor Framework](#) is available on GOV.UK.

The Windsor Framework was adopted by the UK and EU on 24 March 2023. The Framework provides a unique set of arrangements to support the flow of agrifood retail products from Great Britain (GB) to Northern Ireland (NI), allowing GB standards for public health in relation to food, marketing and organics to apply for pre-packed retail goods moved via the NI Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS).

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.

PDF

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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.

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Guidelines for re-commissioning vacuum packers as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (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

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View E. coli O157 cross-contamination for caterers as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (482.8 KB)

