



Cross contamination

What is cross contamination?

Cross contamination occurs when food poisoning bacteria are transferred to **high risk foods which will not be further cooked**, e.g. cooked meats, dairy products, egg dishes etc.

These bacteria may be found on:

- raw foods: meat, poultry, shellfish, eggs, vegetables
- humans: hair, dandruff, nose, throat, intestinal tract
- pests: insects, pets, birds, rodents
- waste: kitchen refuse, leftover food
- dirty equipment: cleaning cloths, chopping boards, worktops

Food poisoning bacteria can pass onto high risk foods directly or indirectly. **Indirect contamination** occurs when bacteria are transferred to the high risk foods via something else such as hands, worktops, chopping boards, equipment or cleaning cloths.

Indirect contamination is the most common type of cross contamination and occurs in food premises because of ignorance, inadequate space, poor design and bad handling practices by staff.

Examples of cross contamination:

- Storing raw food above or next to high risk foods. For example, if raw meat is stored above cooked food, blood and fluids may drip onto the cooked food and contaminate it.
- Equipment that has not been disinfected e.g. cleaning cloths, chopping boards, worktops and utensils coming into contact with food.
- Handling raw food which carries bacteria, then handling cooked food. The bacteria pass from raw food to the hands then on to the cooked food. Or, from the hands to equipment and then on to the cooked food.
- Not washing hands after visiting the toilet. This allows bacteria from the bowel to be transferred to food and equipment.
- Flies and insects transferring bacteria from animal excrement to food.

- Rats and cockroaches bringing bacteria from sewers and drains into the kitchen.

How to prevent cross contamination

- Store raw food in one refrigerator and cooked food in another. If this is impossible, make sure cooked food is stored above raw food.
- Keep food covered. This prevents contamination from insects, flies etc.
- Use separate equipment and surfaces for raw food and cooked food. If this is impossible, make sure that equipment and surfaces used for raw food are thoroughly cleaned and sterilised before cooked food is used on them.
- Make sure insects, rodents, pets and birds are kept out of the food room.
- Always wash hands after handling raw food, visiting the toilet, smoking, coughing, sneezing, handling waste and cleaning chemicals.
- Use colour coded equipment e.g. chopping boards, knives and cleaning cloths.

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