

FOOD POISONING

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Contents:

- Objective
- What is food poisoning?
- Cause of food poisoning
- Symptoms
- High Risk Groups
- Immediate Response
- Notification and Reporting
- Investigation
- Remedial Action
- Communication and Support
- Review and Prevention
- Follow-up

Objective:

The objective of this SOP is to outline the steps to be taken in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of food poisoning within catering services provided to asylum seekers. Prompt and efficient action is crucial to minimize the impact on individuals' health and prevent the spread of illness.

What is food poisoning?

Food poisoning, also known as foodborne illness, is a condition caused by consuming contaminated food or beverages. Contamination can occur due to various factors, including bacteria, viruses, parasites, or toxins produced by microorganisms. When ingested, these harmful agents can lead to a range of symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever, and fatigue.

The severity and duration of symptoms can vary depending on the type of contaminant and the individual's health status. Food poisoning can affect anyone, but certain groups, such as young children, elderly individuals, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems, are at a higher risk of experiencing severe complications. Prompt identification and management of food poisoning incidents are essential to prevent further spread of illness and ensure the well-being of affected individuals.

Cause of food poisoning:

Food poisoning can be caused by various pathogens and contaminants present in food or beverages. Bacteria are the most common culprits, including species such as Salmonella, Escherichia coli (E. coli), Campylobacter, and Listeria monocytogenes. These bacteria can contaminate food during processing, handling, or storage, especially if proper hygiene and sanitation practices are not followed.

Viruses such as norovirus and hepatitis A virus can also cause food poisoning, often spreading through contaminated water or raw produce. Additionally, parasites like Giardia and Cryptosporidium can contaminate food and water sources, leading to illness upon ingestion. Inadequate cooking or improper storage temperatures can allow these pathogens to multiply in food, increasing the risk of foodborne illness.

Furthermore, toxins produced by certain bacteria, such as Staphylococcus aureus and Clostridium botulinum, can contaminate food and cause illness even if the bacteria are no longer present. Overall, ensuring proper food handling, hygiene, and sanitation practices is essential to prevent food poisoning and safeguard public health symptoms.

Symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea
- Stomach Cramps and Pain
- Fever

Food poisoning can manifest with a variety of symptoms, typically affecting the gastrointestinal system. One of the most common symptoms is nausea, which may be accompanied by a sensation of queasiness or discomfort in the stomach. Vomiting is also common, as the body attempts to expel the harmful substances ingested with contaminated food or beverages. Diarrhoea, characterized by loose or watery stools, is another hallmark symptom of food poisoning, often accompanied by abdominal cramps or pain. Additionally, individuals may experience fever, which indicates the body's immune response to the infection. Fatigue and weakness are common as the body works to fight off the invading pathogens and recover from the illness. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle aches, and dehydration, especially if vomiting and diarrhoea are prolonged. It's important to note that the severity and duration of symptoms can vary depending on the type of contaminant ingested and the individual's overall health condition. If symptoms persist or worsen, seeking medical attention is advisable to prevent complications and ensure proper treatment.

High-Risk Groups:

High-risk groups are groups of people who are particularly susceptible to food poisoning. These groups are more likely to contract food poisoning and suffer from more serious symptoms or complications and can even die because of the infection.

High-risk groups include young children, pregnant women, elderly people, people with weakened immune systems and people with chronic illness.

Immediate Response:

Upon receiving reports of illness, isolate affected individuals to prevent the spread of contamination.

Provide affected individuals with access to clean water and medical assistance if necessary.

Secure any remaining food suspected to be the source of contamination for analysis.

Notification and Reporting:

Inform relevant authorities immediately upon suspicion or confirmation of food poisoning case.

Raise an Incident Report and update the Safeguarding lead.

Keep records of all reported cases, including symptoms, affected individuals, and any actions taken.

Investigation:

Conduct a thorough investigation into the potential source of contamination, including examining food storage, preparation, and handling practices.

Review records of food suppliers and ensure compliance with food safety regulations.

Interview staff involved in food preparation and service to identify any lapses in hygiene protocols.

Remedial Action:

Discontinue the distribution of any suspected food items immediately.

Conduct a deep clean of all food preparation and storage areas, utensils, and equipment.

Reinforce hygiene training for all staff members, emphasizing the importance of handwashing, proper food handling, and sanitation practices.

Communication and Support:

Keep asylum seekers informed about the situation, including steps being taken to address the issue and any changes in catering services.

Provide support and assistance to affected individuals, including access to medical care and counselling if needed.

Offer alternative meal options until the issue is resolved to ensure the nutritional needs of asylum seekers are met.

Review and Prevention:

Conduct a comprehensive review of food safety procedures and protocols to identify areas for improvement.

Implement any necessary changes to prevent similar incidents in the future, such as enhancing staff training, implementing stricter quality control measures, or revising supplier agreements.

Regularly monitor and audit food safety practices to maintain compliance and prevent recurrence of food poisoning incidents.

Follow-Up:

Follow up with affected individuals and raise the necessary Incident reports to monitor their recovery and address any ongoing health concerns.

Maintain open communication channels with relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the resolution process.

Document lessons learned and update the SOP as necessary to enhance preparedness for future incidents.

Note: This SOP is intended as a guideline and should be adapted to suit the specific circumstances and requirements of the catering service providing meals to asylum seekers. Collaboration with relevant health authorities and adherence to local regulations are essential for effective management of food poisoning incidents.