

# FOOD SAFETY MATTERS

March 2011

Edition Fourteen

## IN THIS EDITION OF FSM:

- ⇒ MenuWise – first businesses onboard!
- ⇒ *Staphylococcus aureus*
- ⇒ Handwashing & equipment maintenance
- ⇒ Controlling pesky pests
- ⇒ Foreign objects and contaminants in food

## ONLINE FOOD SAFETY TRAINING – Do you have the right Skills & Knowledge?

Making sure that food handlers have appropriate skills and knowledge is not only about meeting your legal obligations, it is also good for business! Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements* states: *“food businesses must ensure that food handlers, and people who supervise food handlers, have skills and knowledge in food safety and food hygiene”*.

Whilst it may not be necessary for all of your staff to undertake formal food safety training courses, as the proprietor, you have an obligation to ensure that their skills and knowledge are adequate to perform all aspects of their role in a manner consistent with the safe, hygienic production of food. On-the-job training and prior experience may be suitable for some staff, however formal food safety training is highly recommended as minimum for the proprietor or manager and supervisory staff members who are then able to instruct other employees on correct food handling processes.

Where non-compliances are identified during inspections, it generally indicates that the skills and knowledge base of staff is lacking, they don't care or are just taking shortcuts! This exposes you and/or your business to potential enforcement action, including infringements of \$250 to \$1000, or prosecution with fines ranging from \$10,000 to \$250,000.

Health Services and Challenger Institute of Technology (formerly Challenger TAFE) offers a heavily discounted online, self paced, nationally accredited 'Hygiene for Food Handlers' course [*Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations); Follow Workplace Hygiene Procedures*]. The course has received positive feedback from many of its past participants, including the following statement of support from Theodore Kailis – Kailis Bros Fish Markets and Café, Leederville:

*“The Town's food safety programme, in conjunction with Challenger TAFE, has provided our team with realistic procedures and practical information to use every day in our business, ensuring we deliver the highest standard of quality food to our customers. We also greatly benefited from doing the programme with 12 of our own participants which made the implementation a shared responsibility”*.

We encourage you to consider formal training for your staff, and to discuss your current premises operation and training requirements with an Environmental Health Officer. Further information on the Hygiene for Food Handlers Course and enrolment forms are available on the Town's website.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FIRST MENUWISE BUSINESSES HELPING CUSTOMERS MAKE THE HEALTHIER CHOICE—AN EASY CHOICE!

### MenuWise Accredited

Café Vincent—Beatty Park Leisure Centre, North Perth & Lush Fresh Food & Coffee, Mount Hawthorn



Businesses working hard to implement MenuWise:

Txt Shots – Mount Hawthorn; Kitsch & Loftus Recreation Centre Kiosk – Leederville; TAFE – Leederville & Mount Lawley; Spotless Catering Outlets & Bunga Raya Satay – nib Stadium (Perth Oval); 33°South & Milkd – North Perth.

For further information on MenuWise, log onto: <http://www.vincent.wa.gov.au/3/769/1/menuwise.pm>

## CORRECT HANDWASHING

Recent inspections have identified that many food handlers are not demonstrating the correct hand washing technique, and that food businesses do not have compliant hand wash basins. Both are essential elements required to prevent food poisoning bacteria contaminating food.

**Time to upgrade your facilities?** Hand wash basins must:

- Be located in the kitchen and near to the toilets, and must be easily accessible for staff to use
- Have warm running water from a common outlet (not separate hot and cold water taps)
- Never be used to wash, prepare or store food and/or equipment
- Be stocked with liquid soap and disposable paper towels – drying hands after washing removes water and any remaining bacteria – which is why reusable tea towels are not approved!

### When should I wash my hands?

#### Before

- Commencing work activities

- Handling food

#### After

- Using the toilet

- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing

- Scratching hair, nose or other body parts

- Handling money, rubbish or other dirty objects

- Smoking

#### Between

- Handling raw and cooked food

### Hand washing is a crucial element of food safety

If non-compliances are noted at your business, fines will be issued in accordance with the *Food Act 2008* – no apologies!

## FEATURE MICRO-ORGANISM — *STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS*

*Staphylococcus* is a group of bacteria that has the ability to cause a number of diseases as a result of infection. *Staphylococci* is found in the nose and on the skin of ~25% of adults. **Staphylococcal infections are contagious – proper hygiene and hand washing is essential.**

More than 30 different types of *Staphylococci* can infect humans, but most are caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*, which has the ability to produce toxins and are responsible for many cases of food poisoning.

### Staphylococcal food poisoning

*Staphylococcal* food poisoning is an illness of the bowels that results in nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhoea and dehydration. It is caused by ingesting foods contaminated with toxins that are produced by *Staphylococcus aureus*. Symptoms develop 1 to 6 hours after the consumption of contaminated food and the illness can last for up to three days. Some strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* are also resistant to antibiotics, which can cause difficulty in recovery.

The most common way for food to be contaminated with *Staphylococcus* is via **food handlers** who carry the bacteria. Once food is contaminated, the bacteria multiply and produce toxins that can cause illness. **The toxins are heat resistant and cannot be destroyed by cooking.**

### Prevention

There is no vaccine against *Staphylococcus aureus*, and the bacteria cause many different diseases, making it difficult to prevent an infection from *Staphylococci*. Prevention requires attention to risk factors capable of increasing the likelihood of infection.

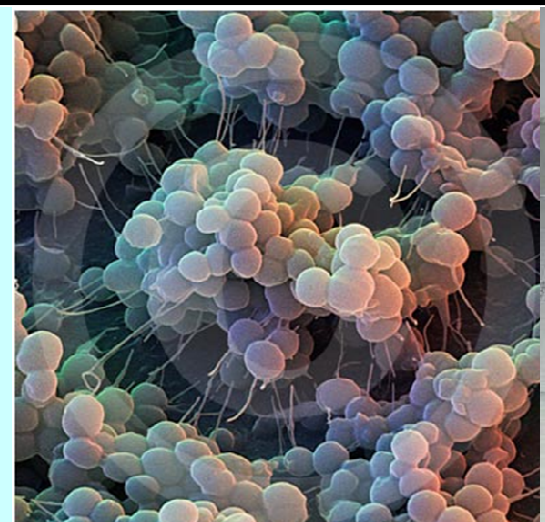
**Correct hygiene measures implemented in food handling and preparation can significantly decrease the risk of Staphylococcal food poisoning. Follow these simple tips!**

- Wash hands and scrub under fingernails effectively: lather thoroughly with soap and warm running water for at least fifteen seconds, and dry your hands on a clean single-use paper towel
- Do not prepare food if you have a nose or eye infection; wound or skin infection on your hands or wrists
- Clean and sanitise food preparation areas
- Keep cold food below 5°C and hot food above 60°C to prevent bacteria multiplying.

**Don't take the hidden nasties in your kitchen and on your staff for granted! Given the opportunity, bacteria numbers will double every 20 minutes!**



*‘Hand washing  
is a crucial  
element of  
food safety’*



## FOREIGN OBJECTS AND CONTAMINANTS IN FOOD

Foreign objects/material in food presents a physical, and usually visible hazard that food processors and food businesses must mitigate.

**Contaminants of this nature can also impact the element most essential to your business – consumer confidence, trust in the producers and its brand.**

Foreign objects can originate from a number of sources:

- equipment (poor maintenance)
- food handlers (i.e. band-aids, jewellery)
- pests and vermin (see photo below!)
- environment (i.e. chemical/biological)

In accordance with Clause 7 (1) (a) of the *FSANZ Food Standards Code*: *“a food business must take all practicable*

*measures to process only safe and suitable food”.*

For the purpose of the Standards, food is considered ‘not suitable’ if it contains a biological or chemical agent, or other matter or substance that is foreign to the nature of the food.

Health Services recently investigated two separate complaints regarding alleged contamination of food by foreign material. One investigation led to the Town taking enforcement action by means of a fine in accordance with the *Food Act 2008*.

It is important to remember that contamination of food products by foreign material is considered high risk and must be dealt with appropriately by food businesses.

## EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Standard 3.2.2 Clause 21 of the *FSANZ Food Standards Code* states: *“A food business must maintain food premises, fixtures, fittings, equipment, and those parts of vehicles that are used to transport food, in a good state of repair and working order having regard to their use”.*

‘Equipment’ includes all equipment used in handling food, as well as equipment used to clean the food premises: refrigerators, cool rooms, bain-marie units, appliances, thermometers, dishwashers, sinks, hand wash basins, brooms, mops, chemicals, garbage containers and pipe-work.

Here are some tips for effective equipment maintenance:

- Food contact surfaces must be **cleaned and sanitised** to keep micro-organisms at safe levels – this applies to food serving equipment such as plates and cutlery, and to any equipment or surfaces that may come into contact with food
- Fittings and equipment must be kept **clean, in a good state of repair, and in good working order** – chipped, cracked or broken utensils must not be used under any circumstance (refer to article above)
- All surfaces within the food premises, including food preparation benches, must be **smooth, impervious and easy to clean**
- Surfaces must not be constructed of any product that absorbs water or allows the build up of filth – i.e. wood, paper, cardboard, unsealed brick or unsealed concrete
- Make sure you quickly repair broken or cracked tiles, peeling paint, or gaps or holes in walls, floors or ceilings, which make surfaces difficult to clean, or allows entry or harbourage of pests

Scheduled equipment maintenance should be integrated into the routine activities of every food business. A lack of maintenance can lead to a significant increase in the risk of food contamination by foreign objects/materials and exposes your business to complaints, enforcement action and loss of customers!



*‘Food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitised to keep micro-organisms at safe levels.’*





## 'PESKY' PEST CONTROL

Pests must be prevented from entering or setting up shop at your premises. Pests can contaminate food with harmful bacteria, cause serious damage to stock and leave their filth at your premises. Common pests in food businesses include cockroaches, birds, flies and rodents.

**A comprehensive, routine pest control programme is essential in all food premises because:**

- Pests can urinate and defecate on food and food contact surfaces (keep food in sealed containers)
- Dead pests may fall into food items and cause contamination
- Pests carry disease causing pathogens that can easily be transferred to food and people
- Clause 24 of the *Food Safety Standards* 3.2.2 requires food business proprietors to ensure their food premises is kept free from all pests.

Health Services urges all food business proprietors to routinely use the services of a professional pest control operator (Pest Management Technician).

Here are some reasons why you should invest in a qualified **pest management technician** (PMT)!

- PMTs have detailed knowledge and experience in specific pests and their behaviour
- A PMT can recommend specific, relevant and safe treatments for use around food
- Licensed PMTs can offer suggestions and practical preventative methods to prevent further pest problems
- Most reputable PMTs provide a service guarantee relating to the effectiveness of their treatment, meaning value for money – if it doesn't work as it is supposed to, call them back for free!



## FROM THE HEALTHY VINCENT TEAM

**THERMOMETERS** – All food businesses must use an accurate probe thermometer to test the temperature of food items. We have a list of thermometer suppliers within the Perth metropolitan area which can be provided to food business proprietors on request. For information on correct thermometer use within your food premises and for a copy of the list of suppliers please contact Health Services.

**THINKING OF RENOVATING?** All food premises must meet specific design requirements and the Town must be contacted prior to any alterations commencing within a food business. If you are planning to alter a premises, please obtain a copy of the *Food Premises Guidelines*.

**QUESTIONS?** If you have any questions relating to the articles in this edition of FSM, or any other issues relating to your food business, please contact Health Services using the details below!

**HEALTH SERVICES TEAM** - Scott Teymant, Larah Di Nella, Christine Ng, Prue Reddingius, Cristina D'Agostino, Alison Giles, Natasha Haythornthwaite.

## TIME TO UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION!

It is important to keep Health Services up to date with any changes relating to your premises – and with annual licence renewals pending it's perfect timing!

**Please complete the enclosed information update/survey form**, and return to Health Services in the reply paid envelope provided (some proprietors will have already completed this form during inspections in the last few weeks). You can also scan your completed form/survey and email to [foodsafetymatters@vincent.wa.gov.au](mailto:foodsafetymatters@vincent.wa.gov.au). Thanking you in advance!

The survey will assist us in providing you with a relevant Food Safety Matters Newsletter (FSM) for you and your staff. We would like to 'go green' – so please provide us with the email address (or multiple addresses) that you would like FSM sent to and help us save a few trees in the process!



**A: 244 Vincent Street / PO Box 82  
Leederville WA 6902**

**E: [health.enquiry@vincent.wa.gov.au](mailto:health.enquiry@vincent.wa.gov.au)**

**P: 9273 6533**

**F: 9273 6099**

**TTY: 9273 6078**

**TOWN OF VINCENT**

*People with specific requirements can ask to have this newsletter provided in alternative formats.*