



# The Food Forum

January 2025

McDonough County Health Department

Volume 13



### Business hours:

Monday—Thursday  
7:30 AM to 5:00 PM.

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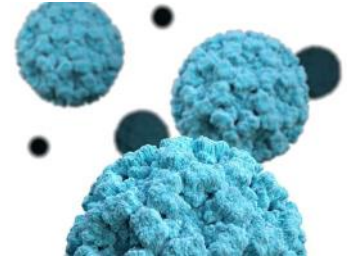
## On the Line

A recent Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report from the CDC assessed foodborne illness outbreaks at retail food establishments in the US from 2017-2019 and found that the most common pathogens were norovirus and salmonella, accounting for 47.0% & 18.6% of outbreaks, respectively.

Approximately 40% of outbreaks had at least one reported factor associated with **food contamination by an ill or infectious food worker**. Only 23% of managers interviewed said that their written sick policy included all five illness symptoms workers are required to notify managers about (i.e. vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, sore throat with fever, and lesion with pus).

### CDC Recommended Public Health Response Action:

Your sanitarian may ask to see your written sick policy and/or logs to verify that employees have knowledge of the foodborne illness outbreak risks associated with working while sick. Development & implementation of policies that prevent contamination of food by sick workers are important to a reduction in foodborne outbreaks. Your employees' understanding of **WHY** it is important not to work when sick with these symptoms will make a difference in whether or not they believe in the foodborne illness risks of their actions. If they do not believe in the risk, they are less likely to make efforts to reduce that risk.



Retail food establishments can reduce foodborne illness outbreaks by protecting food from contamination through proper hand hygiene and excluding sick or infectious workers from working. Your sanitarian can help identify gaps in food safety policies and practices, particularly those concerning sick workers, to help you continue to serve safe foods and keep your customers returning. Your business and reputation are *On the Line*, after all!



### Call or email to register!

2025 CLASSES	DATE(S)	FEE	LOCATION
Certified Food Protection Mgr	T 3/4 8am-4:30pm & W 3/5 1-4pm	\$130	MCHD
Hazard Analysis Class	M 4/7 2pm	FREE! <i>Nat'l Public Health Week</i>	MCHD
Food Handler	Th 4/10 10am-12pm	FREE! <i>Nat'l Public Health Week</i>	MCHD
Hazard Analysis Class	T 9/9 10am-12pm	FREE! Food Safety Education month	MCHD
Certified Food Protection Mgr	T 10/7 8am-4:30pm & W 10/8 1-4pm	\$130	MCHD
CFPM exam proctoring	by appt.	\$100	MCHD

IL adopted the updated 2022 FDA Model Food Code on March 22, 2024.

Additional changes regarding default beverages for children's meals and the latex glove ban went into effect on January 1, 2025. For more information, contact your Sanitarian.

### Did you know?

- 74% of food allergen related incidents arise from restaurants.
- ER visits for food-induced ANAPHYLAXIS have **TRIPLED** in the last 10 years.

## Thriller

Similar to how the well-known song "Thriller" keeps you alert, food safety demands constant attention to detail to prevent your meals from becoming terrifying nightmares. Proper food storage at appropriate temperatures is essential in preventing a food tragedy.

### Keep It Cool, Keep It Safe!

Always keep time/temperature control for safety (TCS) foods, such as meats, dairy products, and leftovers, in the refrigerator or freezer at the proper temperature to avoid dangerous bacteria contaminating your food and multiplying in it, potentially causing foodborne illness. Freezers should be kept below 0°F (-18°C), and refrigerators at or below 40°F

(4°C). This prolongs the freshness of your food by slowing down (but not completely stopping) bacterial growth. To ensure your units are working properly and consistently, temperature logs should be kept. This can help prevent food waste by alerting you early-on when there is a piece of equipment that is not maintaining foods at safe temperatures.

### Don't Let the Meat Get 'Thrilled'

Order Matters! When stacking food in your fridge, always place raw meats, poultry, and fish on the bottom shelves to avoid cross-contamination. Keep ready-to-eat foods like fruits and vegetables on higher shelves. Unwashed

produce should be stored below prepped produce that is ready to eat, and anything below it must be covered for protection. Just like in "Thriller", where the dance moves are all perfectly choreographed, the proper order of foods in your refrigerators keeps food safety flowing in your establishment.

Remember, food safety is key in preventing foodborne illnesses and unwelcome gastrointestinal thrills! Keep it cool, keep it safe, and follow the right order. Serve your customers safely so they can enjoy your meals again and again without the fear of any foodborne threats lurking around.

## A Place With No Name

Food allergies affect millions of Americans. Food allergy reactions occur when the body's immune system reacts to certain proteins in food. The health department enforces regulations that require food establishments to list ingredients on packaged food and drinks as well as requiring restaurants to train kitchen managers in allergen awareness and posting signage to protect those with food allergies. The signage can be downloaded here: <https://dph.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idph/files/publications/foodallergyawarenessnotice.pdf>

Unpackaged food served or sold to consumers within a retail food establishment must have written notification to consumers of the presence of major food allergens as an ingredient in the unpackaged food items (think buffets, bakery cases, etc).

Self-serve bulk foods need to be prominently labeled in plain view of the consumer with the name of the food source(s) from which the major food allergens are derived unless the food source is already part of the common name of the ingredient (i.e. "peanut" in peanut butter).



## Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough (Sanitizer)

Maintaining the proper parts per million (PPM) in sanitizers is crucial for effective sanitizing and public health safety. Whether in food service, healthcare, or other industries requiring sanitation, the right sanitizer concentration ensures harmful pathogens are killed without leaving harmful residues or damaging surfaces. Health codes and chemical EPA registration processes require sanitizers to meet specific PPM ranges to ensure safety. Over-concentrated solutions can cause skin irritation, harm surfaces, or contaminate food products, making accuracy essential.

Test strips are a simple and reliable tool for verifying sanitizer concentration.

Follow these steps:

1. Dip the Test Strip: Immerse a test strip in the sanitizer solution for the time specified on the strip packaging.
2. Remove and Wait: Take out the strip and wait for the recommended time to allow the color to develop fully.
3. Compare Colors: Match the color on the strip to the chart provided with the test kit. This will tell you the PPM of the sanitizer solution.
4. Adjust as Needed: If the PPM is too low, *don't stop* adding sanitizer *'til you get enough!* If too high, dilute the solution with water until the correct concentration is achieved.

It is important to train all employees on the best practices for sanitizer use. Test sanitizer concentrations at machines daily and when mixing new solutions for sinks and buckets. Be sure to store your sanitizers correctly. Sanitizer effectiveness degrades over time, if exposed to heat, light, or contamination (especially chlorine). Finally, test strips lose accuracy over time, so use them before the expiration date.

Maintaining the proper PPM in sanitizers is essential for effective sanitation, regulatory compliance, and the safety of your customers.



\* Chlorine or Quaternary Ammonium Compound test strips are available for purchase at \$8 per vial at our office.

## Somebody's Watching Me

As sanitarians, we know that we tend to make food handlers nervous during inspections. After all, a big part of inspecting is watching you as you prepare food! However, it is of utmost importance that we have a good working relationship with you, the food handlers and managers in our community.

We are trained to ask a lot of questions during inspections to get a good idea of the full picture of your establishment; we only see a snapshot of what you're doing throughout the year during an inspection, and there may be some food handling activities that we never catch depending upon your hours of operation and what time we inspect your facility. We ask many questions to better understand your operation and to see if there are educational materials we can offer to fill any gaps in knowledge we find, or to assist you in streamlining your food safety efforts. We like working together with you to help ensure safe food is served throughout the communities in which we live, work & play. Hopefully you do not find us intimidating! *And allow me to let you in on a little secret-* we love it when you ask us questions! If we don't know the answer, we will do our best to find it for you from a reliable, trusted source.



### Did you notice a theme in this year's Food Forum?

If so, email your guess to [mchd@mchdept.com](mailto:mchd@mchdept.com) by 3/27/25 to be entered in a prize drawing for a vial of sanitizer test strips!