

# COMMUNICATION

## Food Safety & Nutrition Branch

To: Food Businesses/ Food Handlers

Title: Responsibility of food handlers with gastrointestinal illness

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the Code) includes responsibilities for the food business and food handlers, to ensure that food is not to be prepared or handled by anyone who is suffering from a gastrointestinal illness.

### WHAT IS YOUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A FOOD HANDLER?

If you handle food while suffering from or recovering from a gastrointestinal illness, there is a likelihood of food being contaminated.

It is an offence to handle food while you have a gastrointestinal illness. If you have these symptoms or suspect that you are suffering from a foodborne disease or are a carrier, you must notify your workplace.

Examples of gastrointestinal symptoms include:

- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- fever or sore throat with fever.

Alternatively, a doctor may diagnose a food handler as suffering from a foodborne disease.

SA Health recommends that food handlers with symptoms of gastroenteritis or confirmed food poisoning **should not attend work until at least 48 hours after symptoms have ceased.**

Any person who handles food whilst suffering from a gastrointestinal like illness and does not notify their work place is guilty of an offence under the *Food Act 2001*.


### WHAT IS THE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FOOD BUSINESS?

A food business or the proprietor/ supervisor of a food business is responsible for ensuring that food handlers suffering from gastrointestinal symptoms or foodborne disease do not handle food, or allow the food to become contaminated.

A person suffering from a gastrointestinal illness must not engage in any food handling activities however the proprietor may allow the affected food handler to engage in alternative duties which can be safely undertaken that does not involve handling food.

This will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The relevant authority/Local Council Environmental Health Officer, can be contacted to assist with this assessment.





An affected food handler may need to be restricted from a food business completely. This would occur if it were considered that:

- there were no food handling activities the food handler could undertake without there being a reasonable likelihood of food contamination as a result of the disease; or
- no other activities could be found for the food handler that he or she could safely undertake or has the ability to undertake; or
- a food business' facilities or layout were not adequate to prevent the risk of contamination from the affected food handler to other food handlers.

Any proprietor/supervisor of a food business who knowingly allows a food handler to handle food whilst suffering from a gastrointestinal like illness is guilty of an offence under the *Food Act 2001*.

### **Where can I get more information?**

More information can be obtained from the Environmental Health Officer at your local council or alternatively from SA Health.

### **For more information**

**Food Safety & Nutrition Branch  
SA Health  
Telephone: 8226 7100  
11 Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide SA 5000  
[www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/food-index.htm](http://www.health.sa.gov.au/pehs/food-index.htm)**

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