

# Employee Illness Guidelines

Everyone who prepares and/or serves food to the public must follow these guidelines. For example: restaurants, food trucks, childcare kitchens, adult care kitchens, central kitchens, and special events.

For the purpose of this guideline, an employee is anyone who handles food, utensils or equipment, including volunteers, dishwashers and servers.

## The risk of ill employees

Vomiting, diarrhea, and jaundice (i.e., yellowing of the eyes or skin) can be signs of illnesses such as *E. coli*, Hepatitis A, *Salmonella*, or *Norovirus*. People handling food can pass on these illnesses to the public and colleagues through food, drink and dirty dishware or cutlery, making others ill.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) estimates that approximately 40% of foodborne illness outbreaks in restaurants are associated with an ill or infectious food handler.

## Employee health and hygiene policies

Your public health inspector can ask to review your employee health and hygiene policies during an inspection or investigation. These policies are required to meet your responsibility under section 30 of the [Alberta Food Regulation](#). Specifically, the food facility's policies must include the following:

### Employees must not come to work ill with vomiting, diarrhea or jaundice

- Employees must not report to work if they are ill with vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, or if not allowed to by the [Communicable Diseases Regulation](#).
- The food operator (owner, manager or supervisor) must not schedule an employee to work if the employee is ill with vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice.
- The food operator must not schedule an employee to work if the employee has been issued an exclusion order under the [Communicable Diseases Regulation](#).
- The food operator must make any employee who is ill with vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes) leave work right away. The employee can return to work only after 48 hours without symptoms, or when the Medical Officer of Health clears them to return.

### Monitor for illness and outbreaks

- The food operator (owner, manager or supervisor) must watch workers for any signs of illness.

- The food operator must record employees absent due to vomiting or diarrhea. (e.g., names and dates only).
- The food operator must tell employees with jaundice to see a doctor and contact Health Link (811) right away. This can be a symptom of Hepatitis A.
- The food operator should inform Health Link (811) or EPH via the main intake number 1-833-476-4743 if three or more employees are ill with vomiting and/or diarrhea at the same time.

### Employees with other illnesses or conditions

- The food operator (owner, manager, or supervisor) must make sure workers who have cuts, sores, rashes, or boils on their hands, wrists, arms, or other exposed skin take precautions to avoid contaminating food, such as wearing gloves.
- Excluding employees whose signs and symptoms are due to a medical condition is neither required nor recommended. Questions or concerns should be discussed with a medical doctor.  
These can include:
  - Pregnancy,
  - Irritable bowel syndrome,
  - Crohn's Disease,
  - Ulcerative colitis,
  - Conditions that can't make others sick through food.
- If you become aware of an employee with blood-borne diseases such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV, it is not required or recommended to exclude the employee as these are not spread through food handling.
- The food operator must regularly review personal hygiene and best practices to minimize the spread of disease (e.g. handwashing and staying home while sick) with all employees.

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Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

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