



Factsheet - Food sampling

Each year we sample around 120 food items from local businesses as part of its efforts to ensure food safety.

The aim of the programme is to identify the microbiological quality of food and ensure it is safe to sell to the public. The samples are examined for those types of bacteria most commonly associated with that food type*. Examination of the food items is carried out by Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust's Food, Water & Environmental Laboratory.

Taking the sample: the sample is taken randomly from the stock you have available. The quantity required is at least 100 grams. The sample is normally taken just as it would be served to a customer, using your own utensils. The food item is then placed in a sampling bag, labelled with the departments code and the type of food taken and tied with a security tag. All relevant information is recorded on a sampling sheet, this will include the temperature of the food storage area at the time the sample is taken, use by dates, who produced the food etc.

What happens next: the food sample is taken to a portable refrigerator located in the officers car. An air temperature of below 5°C is maintained in the portable refrigerator until the sample arrives at the laboratory where it will be maintained at a temperature that will keep food microbiologically unchanged for examination.

You will be notified of your results, using the following terms:

Satisfactory: means that the bacteria found were at acceptable levels

Borderline of acceptability: There were higher than expected levels of bacteria. You will be required to review systems of work to ensure that safe food is produced

Unsatisfactory: This indicates problems with food handling. An urgent review of food handling procedures is required to ensure that food does not cause food poisoning

Unacceptable / Potentially Hazardous: Consumption of this food may cause illness. Immediate action is required.

Any appropriate advice on improving practices will be given at that time. You should regularly review your systems to ensure good handling practices and thorough heat treatment are in place to control pathogenic bacteria and provide safe food. ***Food is tested for some, or all, of the following bacteria:**

- Aerobic Colony Count (ACC - the total bacteria found in the food)
- Eschericia coli (E coli)
- Staphylococcus aureus
- Clostridium perfringens
- Bacillus species and specifically Bacillus cereus
- Listeria species especially Listeria monocytogenes
- Salmonella species
- Campylobacter

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