



## Cross contamination

Cross contamination occurs when one object becomes contaminated by either direct or indirect contact with another object which is already contaminated. This fact sheet aims to provide the food service industry with information on how cross contamination occurs and practices which can prevent it.

### How does cross contamination occur?

Cross contamination occurs when bacteria are transferred from one object to another, either by direct or indirect contact. Common activities which result in cross contamination include:

- Using the same knife and board to cut raw meat and ready to eat foods (salads, cooked quiche etc)
- Defrosting food or placing dirty utensils and equipment in the hand wash basin
- Storing food uncovered or on the floor of the fridge or coolroom
- Storing raw food above ready to eat food
- Keeping cleaning chemicals next to dry and tinned foods
- Re-using a cloth to wipe benches, cutlery and tables
- Using a tea towel for drying equipment, utensils or hands after washing
- Not washing fruits and vegetables to remove soil, grubs and other residues

### Why is cross contamination a problem?

Cross contamination can cause food poisoning when bacteria are transferred on to food which is ready to eat. For example, if raw meat comes into contact with cooked chicken on a sandwich, the customer will consume the bacteria found on raw meat.

### How do I prevent cross contamination?

Cross contamination may occur in many ways, but just a few simple steps will help you prevent it from occurring in your food service business. These include:

- Using separate utensils or thoroughly washing and sanitising utensils between handling raw and ready to eat foods
- Keep food covered and off the floor during storage and, as far as practical, during handling
- Avoid any unnecessary contact with food
- Store raw foods, especially meat, fish and poultry, on the bottom shelf of the fridge or coolroom to prevent blood dripping onto ready to eat foods
- Keep cleaning chemicals and other non-food items stored away from food items
- Regularly change, or wash and sanitise, cloths used for wiping benches, tables or other equipment. Never use cloths used for cleaning toilets or similar areas for cleaning anything that may come in contact with food.
- Dry hands after washing with disposable paper towel or with a hot air dryer
- Let equipment and utensils air dry after washing and sanitizing; and
- Always wash your hands when changing tasks, starting work or returning from a break.

### Where do I go for more information?

• **Restaurant and Catering Queensland**  
PO Box 101  
Royal Brisbane Hospital  
QLD 4029  
Telephone: 07 3252 8880  
Facsimile: 07 3252 7554

Email:  
[rcqld@restaurantcater.asn.au](mailto:rcqld@restaurantcater.asn.au)

Web Site:  
[www.restaurantcater.asn.au](http://www.restaurantcater.asn.au)

or contact the Environmental Health Officer from you local government



**Queensland Government**  
Queensland Health



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND INC.**



**Australian Institute of Environmental Health**

*A joint initiative between **Restaurant and Catering Queensland, Queensland Health, Local Government Association of Queensland and the Australian Institute of Environmental Health** to assist the food service industry produce safe food.*