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Food safety - your responsibilities

1. Food safety

If your business deals in food you must:

- make sure food is [safe to eat \(http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/\)](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/)
- make sure you do not add, remove or treat food in a way that makes it harmful to eat
- make sure the food is the same quality that you say it is
- make sure you do not mislead people by the way food is labelled, advertised or marketed
- keep records on where you got food from and show this information on demand - known as 'traceability' (PDF, 90KB) (<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa1782002guidance.pdf>)
- withdraw unsafe food and complete an incident report
- tell people why food has been withdrawn or recalled, for example by using a leaflet or poster
- display your food hygiene rating (if you sell food direct to the public)

Food additives

If you use an additive in food you must:

- only use an [approved additive \(http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/additivesbranch/enumberlist\)](http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/additivesbranch/enumberlist)
- only use it if it is an [approved additive or E number \(https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/approved-additives-and-e-numbers\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/approved-additives-and-e-numbers) for use in that food

The [approved additive or E number \(https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/approved-additives-and-e-numbers\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/approved-additives-and-e-numbers) must not exceed the maximum permitted level.

2. Food hygiene

Part of complying with food safety is managing [food hygiene \(http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/\)](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/).

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan

You usually have to write a plan based on the [HACCP principles \(/food-safety-hazard-analysis\)](/food-safety-hazard-analysis) if you run a food business. This keeps your food safe from biological, chemical and physical safety hazards.

Food contact materials

Materials and packaging that can be reasonably expected to come into contact with food are called 'food contact materials'. These can include:

- packaging
- food processing equipment
- cookware
- work surfaces

To keep food safe for consumption:

- make sure food contact materials don't transfer anything to food they touch
- make sure food contact materials don't change the food they touch
- when inspected, be able to show where the food contact materials came from

Bacteria and food poisoning

To keep food safe from bacteria, you should follow HACCP. Bacteria that cause serious health problems are:

- [E.coli O157 and campylobacter \(http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide\)](http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/guidancenotes/hygguid/ecoliguide)
- salmonella, especially with the storage and handling of eggs

Food hygiene training

Employers are responsible for staff hygiene training. It can be either a formal programme or informal training, such as on the job training or self study.

Food allergies

If you are a food retailer or caterer you need to manage [food allergies \(https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses) when preparing and selling food.

3. Food inspections

You can be inspected by your local council at any point in the food production and distribution process. All inspectors must follow the [Food Law Code of Practice \(http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/\)](http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/)

[enforcework/foodlawcop/](#)). Usually, you will not be told an inspection is going to happen.

How often you're inspected depends on the risk your business poses to public health. You might not be inspected as often if you're a member of a recognised assurance scheme. You can search for a registered assurance scheme online.

If you're a food retailer or caterer you'll be inspected regularly to make sure you comply with food safety laws. Check the [guidance for caterers \(http://food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/sfbbcaterers/\)](http://food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hygleg/hyglegresources/sfbb/sfbbcaterers/) and [guidance for food retailers \(https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-for-retailers\)](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-for-retailers).

Your premises, food, records and procedures can be inspected. Food samples can be taken as well as photographed.

Find your [local council enforcement officers \(http://food.gov.uk/enforcement/yourarea/\)](http://food.gov.uk/enforcement/yourarea/).

After the inspection

You'll be sent a letter confirming any improvements you need to make and by when. Usually, you're responsible for confirming these improvements have been made.

For serious food safety problems you may be sent a 'notice'. The notice can include banning you from using certain equipment or processes until improvements have been made. Your business will be revisited to make sure you have followed the improvements in the notice. Example notices include a:

- Hygiene Improvement Notice
- Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices - banning you from using certain equipment or

following certain processes

Appeals

Your letter or notice should tell you how you can appeal a decision by an inspector.

4. Report a food safety incident

You must tell the Food Standards Agency (FSA) if you think any food your business:

- has sold is unsafe
- has is unsafe

The FSA will tell you if the food must be withdrawn and customers asked to return it.

Submit a [food safety incident report \(https://reportanincident.food.gov.uk/\)](https://reportanincident.food.gov.uk/).

FSA food incidents helpline

Telephone: 020 7276 8448

[Find out about call charges \(/call-charges\)](#)

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