



What is Food-Borne Illness?

If you are under the impression that food-borne diseases are not common — think again. Today, food safety is receiving more and more attention, not only by nutrition experts but also the government, the biomedical community and the public.

Food safety is a concern at home, in restaurants and at Toronto's Long-Term Care Homes and Services. Each day, our long-term care homes serve residents three full meals, between-meal snacks, as well as food and drinks at special events and activities. In addition, where required, meals are prepared and served for Adult Day Care, Children's Day Care, Meals-on-Wheels programs, and at cafeterias for staff and residents' families. With all that food being prepared and served everyday, we make food safety a top priority, ensuring our meals provide a safe and healthy experience for everyone.

What is Food-Borne Illness?

It is when sickness is caused by the ingestion of food containing microbiological, chemical or physical hazards. Although most of these infections cause only mild illness, severe infections, serious complications and death may occur in high-risk populations, such as in older adults and people with impaired immunity.

The most common causes of food-borne illnesses in food service are:

- ❖ Improper cooling of foods
- ❖ Too much time between preparation and eating
- ❖ Infected people handling food
- ❖ Inadequate reheating
- ❖ Improper hot-holding temperatures
- ❖ Contaminated ingredients
- ❖ Food from unsafe sources
- ❖ Improper cleaning
- ❖ Cross contamination from raw to cooked products
- ❖ Inadequate cooking.

A Highly Qualified Team

Long-Term Care Homes and Services have a highly qualified team of Registered Dietitians, Nutrition Managers, Cooks and Food Service Workers. All staff employed in the Food and Nutrition department is certified by City of Toronto Public Health as Food Handlers. In addition, the Program and Services staff involved in any resident events or programs where food is prepared or served are also certified.

Many of our staff are college certified graduates of the Food Service Worker Program and a growing number are certified by the National Food Safety Training Program.

Toronto Public Health – Our Partners in Prevention

Toronto Public Health makes regular visits to our kitchens and food preparation areas to ensure we maintain a clean, safe and sanitary environment, and that we use safe practices for receiving, storing, preparing and serving food in our homes.

Any concerns noted during these routine visits are followed up immediately. As an extra safety measure, Long-Term Care Homes and Services contracts with a private laboratory to conduct independent reviews and food sampling.

Routine Activities that Promote Food Safety

The homes promote many routine practices that ensure food safety.

- ❖ Cleaning is a priority. The Food and Nutrition staff is trained on the correct use of cleaning chemicals and sign-off to verify that cleaning assignments have been completed. Staff routinely check and verify the concentration of

chemicals used for washing dishes and cooking pots.

We routinely check and record temperatures for all:

- ❖ Refrigerators and freezers
- ❖ Foods at time of cooking
- ❖ Foods at time of service
- ❖ Dishwashing
- ❖ Pot washing.

In addition, all food products are purchased from reliable suppliers.

What Can You Do to Help?

Friends and family can contribute to a resident's quality of life and nutrition intake by providing familiar, well-liked foods that may not be available in the home. Here are a few tips for visitors to the home to ensure the safety and well-being of all residents:

DO

- ✓ Check with home staff to ensure that hazardous food (meats, eggs and dairy products) are allowed to be brought into the home for the resident's consumption
- ✓ Bring all cooked or prepared food for a resident to the Nutrition Manager,



Registered Dietitian or Registered Nursing staff so they can assess suitability and ensure that they are labelled and stored safely

- ✓ Ensure personal refrigerators in the resident's rooms are in proper working order and that they are cleaned out regularly. Discard items that are past their "best before date"
- ✓ Use safe food handling techniques in preparing, packaging, storing and transporting food items
- ✓ Bring only enough food for the resident you are visiting to eat in a single sitting.

DO NOT

- ✗ Store food in the car. Go directly to the home
- ✗ Share this food with other residents, as they may have food allergies or dietary restrictions
- ✗ Put food in the resident's drawers or leave extra food for them to consume later.

For more information on food handling, please speak with the Nutrition Manager or Registered Dietitian in the home, or contact Toronto Public Health at <http://insideto.toronto.ca/health>. Please do your part to ensure a safe food environment is maintained!

We take quality seriously

Accreditation Canada* develops national standards to guide quality, safety and satisfaction in all aspects of health care services, including long-term care and community health



services. The accreditation process includes self-assessment, on-site survey and follow up action to achieve continuous improvement. Toronto Long-Term Care Homes and Services has participated in the national accreditation program since 1985 and has consistently maintained strong results. We are committed to quality and we use the Accreditation Canada process to guide our journey. Accreditation is the consumers' assurance of quality care.

*Accreditation Canada was previously known as the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation

About *Just for Families*...

Just for Families is a series of information brochures created to provide important information for residents, clients and families of Toronto Long-Term Care Homes and Services. We believe that residents, clients and families are important members of the care team and that if they understand aging, health concerns and long-term care issues we will jointly achieve better outcomes.

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