



Food Collection/Sampling Protocol for Health Care Facilities

The collection and storage of food for the purposes of laboratory analysis in health care facilities is an important component of preparing for and managing an outbreak. The submission of the food samples for analysis provides valuable information in understanding and controlling the outbreak. The following outlines the proper way to collect and store food samples.

Amount of Food

A minimum of 200 grams of food must be kept to ensure adequate laboratory analysis can be performed on the sample.

Sample Containers

Ensure food is collected and stored in a suitable sterile container with a lid (non-sterile Styrofoam cups are inappropriate for this purpose).

Type of Food Sampled

All ready-to-eat hazardous food from every meal should be saved.

Hazardous Foods: poultry, beef and veal, rice dishes, mixed salads (potato, tuna, egg), pork and ham, dairy products, cream based pastry, pudding or pie fillings, fish and seafood and puréed, ground or mixed food.

Ready-to-eat foods that contain multiple items (meat and gravy, casseroles, sandwiches) may be collected as a single sample. If foods that contain multiple items are sampled separately, the separation must be performed at the sample collection stage.

Point of Sample

Food collected should be taken from the point of service (from the tray line, cafeteria/dining room, hot holding units in the servery) to ensure an accurate reflection of the food quality at the point of consumption.

Labelling of Samples

Ensure that the samples are labelled with the date and time of sample collection, food type and point of service/location where the sample was collected.

Storage Facilities

Where possible, refrigerated storage at a temperature between 2 to 4°C should be used. If refrigerated space is limited, storage at freezer temperatures is an acceptable alternative. A properly identified designated location in the refrigerator/freezer should be used to store the food samples.

Duration of Storage

Food samples are to be kept for a minimum of 7 days. After 7 days, the food should be properly disposed.