

Restaurant Traits Linked with Safer Ground Beef Preparation and Cooking Practices

EHS-Net Study Findings and Recommendations

E. coli, a germ often found in raw ground beef, causes many foodborne illnesses each year. Hamburgers made from ground beef are often the source of these germs. These germs can make people sick if burgers are undercooked (not cooked to a high enough temperature to kill the germs). These germs can also make people sick if they get into other food or onto other surfaces (cross contamination).

We don't know much about how restaurants prepare and cook ground beef for hamburgers. If we know more about these practices, we can improve them and lessen the number of foodborne illnesses.

What the Study Described

The purpose of this study was to describe traits of restaurants linked to safe ground beef practices. We focused on practices related to preventing undercooking and cross contamination.

What the Study Found

EHS-Net found that chain restaurants and restaurants with food-safety certified kitchen managers (CKMs) have safer ground beef practices.

Safer ground beef practices in chain restaurants compared to independent restaurants include the following:

Managers in chain restaurants

- Were **more likely** to say that they take the final temperature of hamburgers with a thermometer
- Were **less likely** to say that they serve rare or medium-rare hamburgers, even if customers ask for it

Workers in chain restaurants

- Were **less likely** to wipe their hands on cloths or aprons after touching raw ground beef
- Were **less likely** to use the same utensils on raw ground beef and other foods without washing between uses

EHS-Net found that chain restaurants and restaurants with certified kitchen managers may have safer ground beef practices than other restaurants.



This study was conducted by the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net). EHS-Net is a federally funded collaboration of federal, state, and local environmental health specialists and epidemiologists working to better understand the environmental causes of foodborne and waterborne illness. Visit EHS-Net at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet>.

Safer ground beef practices in restaurants with CKMs compared to those without CKMs include the following:

Managers in restaurants with CKMs

- Were **more likely** to say that they take the final temperature of hamburgers with a thermometer
- Were **less likely** to say that they serve rare or medium-rare hamburgers, even if customers ask for it. Rare or medium-rare hamburgers are undercooked.



EHS-Net Recommends

Restaurant management should support kitchen staff in efforts to become food safety certified.

Food-safety programs should develop measures to improve ground beef practices. These measures should focus on independent and sit-down restaurants.



Key Terms

Certified kitchen manager: a restaurant manager that has passed a test about food safety.

Chain restaurant: one with the same name and operations as other restaurants. Restaurants with the same name in many cities are chain restaurants.

Cross contamination: spread of germs from one surface or food to another by contact.

Environmental health specialists: public health workers who enforce health and safety standards related to food and other consumer products

E. coli: germ that causes foodborne illness.