

Factors Affecting Safe Food Preparation by Food Workers and Managers

EHS-Net Study Findings and Recommendations

Most foodborne illness outbreaks linked to restaurants are related to unsafe food handling by workers. Studies have shown that food workers often do not handle food safely. To improve worker practices, we need to know the factors that affect those practices.

What the Study Described

This study described the beliefs of workers and managers about what makes it easier or harder for them to do seven safe food-handling practices:

- Washing hands.
- Preventing contamination of food.
- Using gloves.
- Cooking food to the right temperature.
- Keeping heated food hot.
- Keeping cooled food cold.
- Reheating food to the right temperature.

What the Study Found

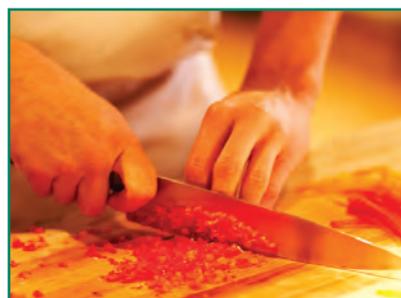
Several factors are linked to whether workers handle food safely. They include management and coworkers, negative effects, food safety training, and restaurant procedures. The two most common factors were time pressure and equipment and resources.

Many current efforts in food safety are focused on training. But responses by food workers show that training alone is not enough to ensure food safety. To be successful, food-safety programs must do more than give training. They must also address the full range of factors that affect food-handling practices.

Many of the factors are influenced by management. This suggests that management plays an important role in food safety. For example, managers often directly affect whether staffing is enough. The study also suggests that future food-safety plans should focus on management.

EHS-Net asked food workers about things that made it harder to safely handle food. Workers most commonly said those things were

- Time pressure.
- Lack of or poor equipment and resources.



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>.

EHS-Net Recommends

These results can be used to guide future research in this area. For example, future research might focus on finding which factors have the greatest effect on food safety.

These results can guide restaurants in their attempts to improve food safety. For example, managers could review their practices and kitchens and find problems with food safety in their restaurants. They could also talk to food workers and find what problems stop them from handling food safely. Managers can then try to fix these problems.

Food-safety programs could try to better understand factors that affect food safety in restaurants in their areas. Then they could then try to help restaurants fix those factors.



Key Term

Environmental health specialists: public health workers who enforce health and safety standards related to food and other consumer products. They conduct restaurant inspections.