

How Often Retail Delis Clean Their Slicers

EHS-Net Study Findings and Recommendations

EHS-Net Recommends

States, localities, and the retail food industry should use information from this study to inform prevention efforts. These efforts should focus on independent and small delis and should encourage or require

- Deli manager training and certification and
- Written slicer-cleaning policies consistent with Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines.

Why This Study Was Done

Listeria monocytogenes (Lm) causes the third highest number of foodborne illness deaths in the United States each year. It has been found in a variety of foods, including cooked or processed foods such as deli meats. *Lm* contamination of sliced deli meats at retail locations is a major cause of listeriosis outbreaks.

We need to know more about practices in retail delis to prevent *Lm* growth and cross-contamination. This information can help delis and food safety programs make improvements to reduce risk.

What the Study Described

The purpose of this study is to describe

- Whether deli slicers are fully cleaned as often as FDA recommends (every 4 hours) and
- Deli, manager, and worker traits related to how often slicers are cleaned.

EHS-Net found that only half of deli managers and food workers said their deli slicers were fully cleaned as often as recommended to prevent *Listeria monocytogenes* and other germs from spreading.



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 illness. Visit EHS-Net at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet>.

What the Study Found

We found that only about half of the interviewed deli managers and food workers said that their deli slicers were fully cleaned as often as the FDA recommends. FDA sets these recommendations to prevent *Lm* and other germs from spreading. These germs can make people sick if they get into food or onto surfaces (cross-contamination) and can cause foodborne illness outbreaks.

Managers and workers in delis with any of the following characteristics were more likely to say that their slicers were fully cleaned as often as the FDA recommends:

Managers and Workers More Likely To Say Slicers Fully Cleaned Every 4 Hours in
Chain delis
Delis with more slicers
Delis with more customers
Delis that require manager food safety training
Delis with a worker knowledgeable about food safety
Delis with a written slicer-cleaning policy
Delis with easy-to-clean slicers
Delis with a manager certified in food safety



Key Terms

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.

Foodborne illness: an illness caused by germs in food.

Foodborne illness outbreak: when two or more people have the same sickness after eating food from the same place.

Listeria monocytogenes: germ that causes the foodborne illness listeriosis, a serious infection.

Retail delis: delis that prepare or serve ready-to-eat foods to customers where there is usually a delay between purchasing the food and eating the food. Grocery stores often have retail delis.

Sliced deli meats: meats sliced in a deli at the time of purchase.