

Root Causes Overview

Root causes are the reasons outbreaks occur. They are sometimes called environmental antecedents. Identifying root causes can help determine the steps needed to stop the outbreak and prevent future ones. Explore the **five categories of root causes** below, along with **examples** of each within the context of restaurant outbreaks.

For more information on root causes and reporting them through CDC's National Environmental Assessment Reporting System, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/nears>



People

Lack of food safety culture

Lack of managerial oversight

Language barrier

High turnover

Lack of employee training on specific processes

Insufficient staffing



Equipment

Insufficient capacity of equipment

Improper use of equipment

Lack of preventive maintenance of equipment

Poor facility layout



Economics

Lack of needed supplies for operating the restaurant

Lack of sick leave or other financial incentives to adhere to good employee health practices



Processes

Insufficient processes to mitigate the hazard

Employees or managers not following the facility's processes



Food

Food not treated as time-temperature control for safety



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Environmental Health