

FDA Report on Food Borne Illness Risk Factors Emphasizes Need for Improvement *Study Conducted of Selected Foodservice, Restaurant and Retail Establishments*

A report released by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors in selected foodservice, retail and restaurant facilities, determined that the percentage of risk remained unchanged and needed improvement. Most common risks cited included inadequate hand washing, improper cold holding and improper cleaning/sanitizing of food contact surfaces.

The study conducted by FDA's National Retail Food Team, involved data collection inspections of 900 food establishments of nine facility types at five-year intervals to document the occurrence of the foodborne illness risk factors. This report is the second report in a series and presents data collected in 2003. For the purposes of the study, 'foodborne illness risk factors' are defined as:

- Food from Unsafe Sources
- Improper Holding/Time and Temperature
- Inadequate Cooking
- Poor Personal Hygiene
- Contaminated Equipment/Prevention of Contamination

In all facility types, 'Out of Compliance' percentages remained high for data items related to three of these risk factors: Improper Holding/Time and Temperature; Poor Personal Hygiene; Contaminated Equipment/Prevention of Contamination.

Improper holding/time and temperature risk factor: high percentage for Out of Compliance values were most commonly associated with improper cold holding of potentially hazardous food (PHF) and inadequate date marking of refrigerated ready-to-eat PHF.

Poor personal hygiene: the proper, adequate hand washing data item had the highest percentage of Out of Compliance value for every facility type. Out of Compliance values ranged from approximately 34 percent for hospital foodservice to approximately 73 percent for full service restaurants.

Contaminated equipment/protection from contamination: improper cleaning and sanitizing of food contact surfaces before use had the highest percentage of Out of Compliance values in each facility type. Out of Compliance values ranged from 25 percent in elementary schools to 58 percent in deli departments.

Results from this data collection indicate that the recommendations made to foodservice and retail food operators and regulators in the 2000 Report need to be reemphasized. Foodservice and retail food operators must ensure that their management systems are designed for better control over the risk factors. Regulators must ensure that their inspection, education, and enforcement efforts are geared toward the control of the risk factors commonly found to be Out of Compliance.

The data also suggests that the presence of a certified manager has a positive effect on the control of certain risk factors, especially in fast food restaurants, full service restaurants, meat and poultry departments, and produce departments. Poor personal hygiene appears to be the risk factor for which the presence of a certified manager had the most positive effect.

This study was first initiated in 1998 to measure the occurrence of food preparation practices and employee behaviors most commonly reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as contributing factors in foodborne illness outbreaks. The first report in the study was issued in Aug. 2000 based on this data.

To view the report in its entirety, go to <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/retrsk2.html>