

## **What to do if someone reports a possible foodborne illness after eating at your food facility**

### **1. Call the environmental health department (943-2288) as soon as possible and advise the customer to call us as well**

The faster our department is informed of the possible illness, the more quickly the issue can be resolved. Give our department the customer's full name and phone number so that we can talk to the customer and gather more information. This will help us determine the possible source of the illness.

### **2. Complete your facility's customer complaint form**

A standard customer complaint form should be filled out as soon as possible. Details of the incident should include contact information of the customer, implicated food, symptoms, time, date, etc.

### **3. Talk to your staff and review how the meal or menu item was prepared**

Review all the steps in making the meal, from receiving the ingredients, preparation, to serving the food. Focus on the critical control points which are the steps in the recipe where a loss of control could result in foodborne illness.

### **4. Ask staff if they are ill, or have been ill with foodborne illness-like symptoms**

Foodborne illness can include any of the following symptoms: vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, headache, fever, chills, or a stomach ache. Food handlers with these kinds of symptoms must not handle food until they are symptom free for at least 48 hours. A sick food handler could be the source of the customer illness. Our department may ask the food handling staff to submit a stool or vomitus sample.

### **5. Save food samples from the original meal if possible**

Label the samples and store them in the refrigerator until they are collected by the public health inspector. At the inspector's discretion, the food samples may be taken to the provincial laboratory. The samples will be tested to see if foodborne pathogens (disease causing microorganisms) are present. Our department may also ask the customer to submit a stool or vomitus sample for testing. A foodborne illness is more easily confirmed if the

pathogens from the original meal and from ill people are the same. Laboratory testing may take more than a week.

## **6. Write down all the information you have gathered**

Keep accurate notes and records. These notes may be useful during the investigation and could assist you if further action is taken by the customer.

Acknowledgement: This information was adapted from the City of Toronto, Public Health website [http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/foodhandler/fh\\_27.htm](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/foodhandler/fh_27.htm) with permission from the Healthy Environments department.