

food industry fact sheet



What to do if a patron alleges food poisoning

If someone rings or visits your food service business to report or complain that they think your food made them sick, reassure the person that your business takes their complaint very seriously and that you need to write down some details, so that the incident can be investigated properly.

Do not become apologetic, defensive or indicate to the person that your food may be at fault. This can only be determined by a proper investigation, supported by laboratory tests.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Upon receiving advice from a patron that they believe food from your business made them ill, the person receiving the advice should obtain and record the following details from the patron:

- time and date that the report or complaint was made
- name, address and contact details of person reporting the illness
- how many people are allegedly ill
- time/date food was eaten at your establishment or function
- what foods were eaten
- what food(s) the person suspects caused their illness; and
- whether or not any suspected food remains in the possession of the complainant

Note: The patron is not required to provide you with any of the above information. If they choose to answer the questions, you should treat all information in the strictest confidence

Immediately inform the supervisor or the proprietor of the food business, as applicable, of the details of the incident. The supervisor or proprietor should satisfy themselves that the person who received the advice of alleged food borne illness has recorded all necessary information.

If the supervisor/proprietor is not satisfied that sufficient information has been recorded, they should question the employee to ascertain more detail. If the person who received the initial advice cannot provide more information, the supervisor/proprietor should note what further information is required from the patron.

The supervisor or proprietor should then ascertain if any of the food suspected to have caused the illness remains on their premises. If so, all suspected food remaining should be hygienically contained, labelled as 'Suspected Unsafe Food' and placed under refrigeration, separate from other food. If Queensland Health investigates, an Environmental Health Officer will advise you what is to be done with this food. Otherwise, retain it for 48 hours and contact your local Council for advice regarding its safe disposal.

If more than two people allege they became ill after eating at your premises, you should contact the nearest Queensland Health Public Health Unit to report the incident. They are listed under *Queensland Health* in the White Pages.

Whether or not your business decides to compensate the complainant in any way, is completely a business management decision. Be aware that this may be considered an admission of liability.

Where do I go for more information?

- **Restaurant and Catering Queensland**
PO Box 101
Royal Brisbane Hospital
QLD 4029
Telephone: 07 3252 8880
Facsimile: 07 3252 7554

Email:
rcqld@restaurantcater.asn.au

Web Site:
www.restaurantcater.asn.au

or contact the Environmental Health Officer from your local government.



Queensland
Government
Queensland Health



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION
OF QUEENSLAND INC.



Australian
Institute of
Environmental
Health

A joint initiative between **Restaurant and Catering Queensland, Queensland Health, Local Government Association of Queensland and the Australian Institute of Environmental Health** to assist the food service industry produce safe food.