



# Food Complaints

## What Should I Do?

The City Of Charles Sturt's Environmental Health Officers are responsible for investigating food related complaints. A number of food complaints are commonly reported to Council, with common complaints including:

- **Foreign objects in food**
- **Poor food handling**
- **Dirty food premises**
- **Food spoilage**
- **Food borne illness.**

### **Foreign Objects Found in Food**

Foreign objects found in food can include plastic, metal, glass, stones, fibre, hair, and insects, in fact anything that you would not expect in that particular food. Should you find a foreign object in your food, it is important that you keep it with the food and store it in a safe place. If the food should be kept cold, wrap it up and freeze it. If available, a receipt assists Council to investigate the complaint by proving evidence of the place of sale.

### **Poor Food Handling**

Most food businesses are aware of their requirements to ensure that food is safe and suitable. It is unfortunate but occasionally a customer may observe a food handler adopt a poor hand handling practice. Examples of poor food handling include food handlers not washing their hands, handling ready to eat foods with bare hands and handling money with the same gloved hand used for the handling of food.

### **Dirty Food Premises**

The type of complaints council receives regarding dirty food premises are often to do with bad odours, the storage or disposal of garbage, or simply unclean premises. These complaints do not occur on a frequent basis as most food businesses take care to keep their premises clean, however, problems do arise occasionally.

### **Food Spoilage**

Foods which have not been stored correctly are more than likely to deteriorate or go mouldy. Insects can also spoil foods such as weevils and food moths. These pests feed on a wide variety of foods including flour, cereals, rice, biscuits and other dry goods. It is important to place all dry goods once opened in a lidded container, and discard foods which have been kept for long periods to prevent these common pests from causing a nuisance.

### **Food Borne illness**

Food borne illness is generally caused by pathogenic (harmful) bacteria, viruses or chemical toxins in food or water. Some of these microbes infect our bodies and grow, while others produce a toxin in food. The end result is illness, and in very severe cases food poisoning may even cause death.

Food does not need to be spoiled to cause food poisoning. Food that looks, smells and tastes fine can still cause food poisoning if:

- **Food has not been handled correctly**
- **Food has not been kept under temperature control**
- **Food that has been contaminated in some way.**

### **Symptoms**

The following are symptoms that may be indicative of a disease that is transmitted through food:

- **Diarrhoea**
- **Vomiting**
- **Sore throat with fever**
- **Fever**
- **Jaundice**

Cases of food poisoning can occur from a wide range of foods whether prepared at home, from the local supermarket, takeaway shop and restaurant to name a few, but food poisoning can be virtually eliminated if the food is:

***Properly handled, stored correctly, protected from contamination, and cooked or reheated to the correct temperature***

### **What should you do if you think you or your family may be suffering from a food borne disease?**

1. **Go to your doctor**, so that you can receive immediate medical attention. The doctor should also take a specimen sample which will then be sent to a laboratory for analysis. These results will help to determine if your symptoms are caused from contaminated foods and if so the type of bacteria present. This will assist to determine possible foods which may be implicated.
2. **Make a note** of all the meals you (or the sick person) have consumed within a 10 day period. Include breakfasts, lunches and dinners as well as any snacks you may have eaten. Also include any holidays or trips overseas and interstate. These details will be very helpful if an investigation is required.

Environmental Health Officers work with Food Businesses every day advising and educating food handlers on the correct way of handling food and keeping food safe and suitable.

Should you have any questions related to food or food premises, please do not hesitate to contact Council's Environmental Health Department on 8408 1111.