

Food Safety Glossary

BACTERIA: Single celled living microorganisms that can cause food spoilage and foodborne illness. Some form spores and can survive freezing and very high temperatures. Bacteria are more commonly involved in foodborne illness than viruses, fungi, or parasites.

CONTAMINATION: The presence of harmful substances in the food. Some food safety hazards occur naturally, while others are introduced by humans or the environment.

CROSS-CONTAMINATION: Occurs when microorganisms are transferred from one surface to another.

FOOD CONTACT SURFACE: any surface that comes in contact with foods.

FOODBORNE ILLNESS: A disease carried or transmitted to people by food.

FOODBORNE INFECTION: The result of a person eating food containing pathogens, which then can grow in the intestines and cause illness. Typically, symptoms of a foodborne infection do not appear immediately.

FOODBORNE INTOXICATION: The result of a person eating food containing toxins (poisons) that can cause an illness. The toxins may have been produced by pathogens found on the food or maybe the result of a chemical contamination. The toxins could also be from a plant or animal that was eaten. Typically, symptoms of foodborne intoxication appear quickly, within a few hours.

FUNGI: Fungi range in size from microscopic single-celled organisms to very large, multicellular organisms. Fungi most often cause food spoilage. Molds, yeasts and mushrooms are examples of fungi.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM): program using prevention measures to keep pests from entering an establishment and controls measures to eliminate any pests that do get inside.

MICROORGANISMS: Small, living organisms that can be seen only with the aid of a microscope. The four types of microorganism that can contaminate food and cause food borne illness are bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi.

PARASITE: an organism that needs to live in or on a host organism to survive. Parasites can live inside many animals that humans use for food, such as cows, chickens, pigs and fish. Proper cooking and freezing will kill parasites. Avoiding cross-contamination and proper hand washing can also prevent foodborne illness caused by parasites.

PATHOGENS: Disease causing microorganisms.

POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOOD (PHF): Foods in which microorganisms can grow rapidly. Potentially hazardous food often has a history of being involved in foodborne-illness outbreaks, has potential for contamination due to methods used to produce and process it, and has characteristics that generally allow microorganisms to thrive. Potentially hazardous food is often moist, high in protein, and chemically neutral or slightly acidic.

SANITIZE: The process of reducing the number of microorganisms on a clean surface to safe levels.

TOXINS: Poisons.

VIRUS: The smallest of the microbial food contaminants, viruses rely on a living host to reproduce. They usually contaminate food through a food handler's improper hygiene. Some might survive cooking and freezing temperatures.