

The Importance of Food-Safe Schools



Foodborne illness does not occur just in the cafeteria.



Other school facilities can be involved with foodborne illnesses.

School events can also be the source of foodborne illnesses.



**Food brought from home can
also be involved.**



Incidence of Foodborne Illnesses

- 292 cases reported in schools during the 1990s.*
- Affected 16,000 students.†
- Not all cases are reported, making the actual number far greater. †
- 76,000,000 cases/yr. †
- 325,000 hospitalizations/yr. †
- 5,000 deaths/yr. †

* General Accounting Office. Food safety: continued vigilance needed to ensure safety of school meals. Statement of Lawrence J. Dyckman, Director, Natural Resources and Environment. Washington, DC: April 30, 2002. Available from: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d02669t.pdf>.

† Mead, P.S., et al. Food-related illness and death in the United States. 1999; 5(5). Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol5no5/mead.htm>.

Stories of School-Based Foodborne Illnesses

- In 1998, 11 elementary students became ill; spread to a 2-year-old child, who subsequently developed renal failure.
- In 2000, an *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak caused by a self-serve food bar with unsupervised handling of uncovered food, lack of time for handwashing before eating, and lack of handwashing facilities.

Medical Costs

- Medical costs and productivity losses due to the seven most prevalent and serious foodborne pathogens range from \$6.4B to \$34B annually.*
- This doesn't include the burden on society for chronic illnesses caused by foodborne pathogens.

* U.S. Food and Drug Administration, et al. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office; 1997.



Litigation Costs

- A Washington school was issued a \$4.6M judgment after 11 children were infected with an *E. coli* O15:H7 bacteria linked to ground beef served in the school lunch.*

* National School Boards Association. Experts advise schools on food safety issues. Alexandria, VA: March 26, 2001.

Public Relations Costs

- The reputation of schools, particularly food-services, suffers.



Attitudes and Behaviors of Middle School Students*

- Most students “slightly agree” that they have the skills to prevent foodborne illnesses.
- Most students don’t think they are susceptible to foodborne illnesses.
- 71% seldom wash hands before eating at school or a restaurant.
- 27% seldom wash hands before handling food or eating at home.

* Haapala, I., Probart, C. (2004). Food safety knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors among middle school students. 36:71-76.

Preventing Foodborne Illness at School

- Emergence of resistant and exceptionally hazardous strains of foodborne microorganisms.*
- Occurring at a time when there are even fewer experienced adults in the household to teach food safety lessons to young people at home.*

* Haapala, I., Probart, C. (2004). Food safety knowledge, perceptions, and behaviors among middle school students. 36:71-76.