

# Vomit and Diarrhea Clean-Up Procedure

## WHY DO WE HAVE THIS PROCEDURE?

Vomiting and diarrhea can be symptoms of several very contagious diseases and it is the responsibility of food service management to protect both employees and customers from transmission of these diseases. The most important ways of accomplishing this task are:

- 1) ensure that employees understand the importance of frequent handwashing and that they know where and how to wash their hands;
- 2) ensure that employees understand their responsibility to report all disease symptoms, such as vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, fever and sore throat; diagnosis of diseases; and exposure to others who are sick to the Person in Charge;
- 3) ensure that employees are trained and do not handle food that is ready to eat with their bare hands;
- 4) ensure that employees understand the importance of following all regular cleaning and sanitizing procedures on a daily basis and special cleaning and sanitizing procedures such as this one.

New employees will be trained in all of the above-mentioned procedures within the first week of hiring. Reminder trainings will be done for all food service staff on an **ANNUAL** basis.

## VOMIT/DIARRHEA CLEAN-UP KIT

A vomit/diarrhea clean-up kit is stored in a labeled bin in Contents of Clean-up Kit:

- 1) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)  
disposable gloves, nitrile or non-latex  
face and eye shields (clean and sanitize after use)  
disposable shoe covers  
disposable aprons  
masks  
hair covers
- 2) Paper towels
- 3) Absorbent material: baking soda, Red Z powder, or kitty litter
- 4) Scoop or scraper, preferably disposable
- 5) Large plastic bags with twist ties
- 6) Caution tape for closing off areas

Buckets, wiping cloths, detergent and sanitizers will also be needed and are available in various locations throughout the food service area. The Person-in-Charge is responsible for refilling the clean-up kit after use. Extra supplies will be on hand. All supplies will be purchased or ordered at the time of the incident so that the kit is ready for use as soon as possible after the incident.

## WHEN A VOMITING OR DIARRHEA INCIDENT OCCURS

- 1) Remove the following from the area if no contact with vomit or diarrhea:
  - a) employees and/or customers
  - b) packaged food or food in closed containers
  - c) portable equipment, linens and open single-use and single-service articles.

For diarrhea, the immediate area that is visibly soiled should be the area of clean-up concentration. For vomiting, since particles can be in the air, an area of 25 feet in all directions should be considered the clean-up area. This is very important when considering which employees or customers need to be removed; the food; and open single-use and single-service articles that need to be discarded; the linens that will need to be washed; and the equipment that will need to be cleaned and sanitized.

- 2) If vomiting occurred, completely close off area around the spill for 25 feet in all directions. Use caution tape from the Clean-up Kit.

Some small food service establishments will have to close during the clean-up of a vomiting incident either by an employee or a customer. In the case of closure, the Regulatory Authority should be called immediately to report the incident. A sign can be put at the entrance stating that the food service establishment will be closed until a time judged to be sufficient to accomplish the required clean-up.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_, due to its small size, will close after a vomiting incident until clean-up is finished.
- b) \_\_\_\_\_, will determine what areas will need to be cleaned and sanitized, but will remain open with limited service, unless the incident occurs in the only food prep area.

- 3) A trained employee should put on Personal Protective Equipment, gloves last.

All employees are trained in this clean-up procedure. If staffing allows, cooks should not be the first choice for carrying out the clean-up.

- 4) Sprinkle \_\_\_\_\_ on vomit/fecal matter to soak up liquid. Using the scraper or scoop from the Clean-up Kit, and paper towels, carefully wipe up vomit/fecal matter and discard in a plastic trash bag. Then remove and discard gloves.

If staffing allows, a separate employee, wearing gloves and a mask, can hold the trash bag open by folding the top back over their hands so that the top of the bag is not contaminated in the process of discarding the paper towels, gloves, etc.

- 5) Wash hands and put on new disposable gloves and wash the area involved with detergent and warm water.

All surfaces within the incident area, plus all doorknobs, railings, wall corners or other places that you know are frequently touched should then be washed with soap and water. All restrooms should be cleaned also, even if they were not known to be affected by the incident. They are often used by employees and customers when they are not feeling well and the infectious germs will be there even if they cannot be seen.

All areas washed as described above will then be sanitized.

6) Sanitize hard or porous surfaces with chlorine bleach solution allowing the area to remain wet for no less than 5 minutes; follow policy directions for other surfaces or when using other sanitizers.

Bleach concentrations:

5.25% Sodium Hypochlorite or 6% dish machine sanitizer      1 2/3 cup bleach per gallon of water      5000 PPM  
(1 part bleach to 10 parts water)

8.25% concentrated Sodium Hypochlorite      1 cup bleach per gallon of water      5000 PPM  
(1 part bleach to 16 parts water)

Sanitizer to be used in this establishment will be \_\_\_\_\_ and will be left wet on hard surfaces for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes before drying with papers towels.

Ammonium chloride sanitizers are ineffective against Norovirus so if those are the standard sanitizers used in a food service establishment, then chlorine bleach (or some other commercial product approved by the EPA to kill Norovirus) must be kept on hand for use during a vomit/diarrhea incident.

Bleach is available in several different concentrations so food service establishments need to be aware of the concentration they have available. Once opened, a bottle of bleach maintains its strength for 30 days so PUT THE DATE ON THE BOTTLE WHEN YOU OPEN IT. Discard it after 30 days.

Remember that bleach will discolor many items such as carpets, flooring, etc. Test a small area if there is any reason to believe that there will be a problem. Steam cleaning of carpets and upholstery is recommended once the vomit/diarrhea has been removed. Linens should be washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer.

Open windows or increase ventilation as much as possible during the clean-up.

Make sure that all high-touch areas and restrooms are sanitized before areas are re-opened.

- 7) When totally finished cleaning up, dispose of all paper towels and PPE in the plastic bag. Tie the bag closed and double bag it before putting it in your regular trash.
- 8) Rinse food contact surfaces with clean water to remove chlorine residue left on the surface because you used 5000 PPM to kill the infectious agents and re-sanitize with your usual 100 ppm sanitizer.

## **RE-OPENING ESTABLISHMENT OR CLEANED AREAS**

When the above-described clean-up procedure has been completed, the areas may be re-opened. Establishments that closed for clean-up should call the Regulatory Authority and report that they are ready to re-open. The Regulatory Authority may, or may not, want to actually visit the establishment prior to re-opening.

Establishments should anticipate that some customers may request some kind of compensation. Management should discuss that with employees as part of the training on this procedure. The decision concerning compensation is entirely up to the establishment management.

## **MONITORING EMPLOYEES FOR ILLNESS**

After incidents involving diarrhea and particularly vomiting, all employees, but particularly those involved in the clean-up, will be monitored for signs of illness for several days. The Person-in-Charge will remind employees to report symptoms of any illness.

## **INCIDENT REPORT**

It is advisable for the Person-in-Charge to complete an incident report describing the date and time of the incident; which employees were in charge of the clean-up; an overall description of the area of the incident; how it was cleaned and sanitized; and the other areas of the establishment cleaned and sanitized. It should also state what food was discarded. This report should be kept in the establishment files in case there are any future questions about the incident.

## **REFERENCES:**

"Clean-up and Disinfection for Norovirus ("Stomach Bug") Poster from [disinfect-for-health.org](http://disinfect-for-health.org).

Food Code, U.S. Public Health Service, FDA, 2013, Annex 3, Public Health Reasons/Administrative Guidelines, pages 395-397.

"Food Safety Sample SOP," NFSMI and USDA, Revised 2013.

"Guidelines for Responding to Vomiting and Diarrhea in Food Establishments," Rhode Island Department of Health, Yankee Conference Presentation by Cathy Feeney and Lydia Brown, September 22, 2016.

"Norovirus Information Guide," from SafeMark Best Practices, the Food Marketing Institute and Ecolab, July 2010.

"White Paper: Guidelines for Response to Vomiting and Diarrheal Incidents in Food Service Establishments," prepared by Paula Herald, PH.D., CP-FS, Technical Consultant, The Steritech Group, Inc., [www.steritech.com](http://www.steritech.com).

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