

Introduction

The Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) has developed the Foodservice Employee Health Handbook (FEHH) to encourage practices and behaviors to prevent foodservice employees from spreading viruses and bacteria to food. This handbook provides information in a question-and-answer format that foodservice managers and employees can use to prevent the spread of disease. Included are easy reference forms, tables, and decision trees the foodservice and public health staff can use when training staff and addressing employee health matters. The information in this handbook is taken from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code aimed at preventing ill employees from transmitting disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), FDA, and ADPH name five highly infective pathogens that can easily be transmitted by food workers and cause severe illness. The five foodborne pathogens (Big 5) are:

1. *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) O157:H7 or shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC)
2. Hepatitis A virus
3. Norovirus
4. *Salmonella*
5. *Shigella*

Other pathogens, like *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Streptococcus*, can be transmitted by employees to consumers through contaminated food. To view and print the Big 5 disease one-page flyers, please see the Epidemiology Division's Website, www.adph.org/epi, Epidemiology Flyers.

FEHH highlights a combination of three effective interventions that prevent the transmission of foodborne viruses and bacteria in food establishments. These interventions include:

1. Restrict or exclude ill employees from working with food
2. Use proper handwashing procedures
3. Eliminate bare hand contact with foods that are ready-to-eat (RTE).

Using these interventions together will help prevent the transmission of viruses, bacteria, and protozoan oocysts from employees to consumers through contaminated food.

Managers in the foodservice industry must ensure employees do not work when they are ill. They should have procedures for identifying employees who may transmit foodborne pathogens to food, employees, and customers. Managers must ensure employees and “conditional” hires know the reporting requirements for foodborne illness symptoms and diagnoses. When an employee or conditional employee reports an exposure, symptoms, or diagnosis of a foodborne illness, the managers must take action to prevent the transmission of foodborne bacteria and/or viruses from the employee to the food. The managers must understand the requirements for restricting, excluding, and reinstating employees.

