

Cross contamination

Food Act 2006

Cross contamination occurs when one object becomes contaminated by either direct or indirect contact with another object which is already contaminated. This fact sheet provides information on how cross contamination of food can occur and provides advice about practices that can prevent it.

How does cross contamination occur?

Common activities that result in cross contamination include:

- using the same knife or chopping board to cut both raw and ready-to-eat foods
- using the hand wash basin for defrosting food or placing dirty utensils and equipment
- storing food uncovered or on the floor of the fridge or freezer
- storing raw food above ready-to-eat food
- re-using cloths to wipe benches, cutlery and tables
- using a towel to dry hands which is then used for drying equipment, utensils or dishes.

Why is cross contamination a problem?

Cross contamination can cause food poisoning when bacteria are transferred onto food that is ready to eat. For example, if raw meat comes into contact with cooked chicken on a sandwich, the person eating the sandwich will consume the bacteria that was on the raw meat.

How do I prevent cross contamination?

Some ways to help prevent cross contamination from include:

- using separate utensils or thoroughly washing and sanitising utensils between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods
- keeping food covered and off the floor during storage
- avoiding any unnecessary contact with food
- storing raw foods, especially meat and fish, on the bottom shelf of the fridge to prevent raw meat juices dripping onto ready-to-eat foods
- keeping cleaning chemicals and other non-food items stored away from food
- regularly changing, or washing and sanitising, cleaning cloths. Never use cloths used for cleaning chairs, tables, floors, toilets or similar areas with anything that may come in contact with food
- ideally, letting equipment and utensils air dry after washing and sanitising
- always washing and thoroughly drying your hands when starting work, changing tasks, if you touch your hair or face, or returning from a break (including a cigarette or toilet break).

Further information

Contact your local government if you have any further questions. Contact details can be found at the [local government directory](#).