

Food hazards and food contamination



In a nutshell: All along the food chain, food products are subjected to different preparations and conditions likely to contaminate them. Thus, utmost caution is required throughout the chain to ensure that food is not contaminated.

Food hazards

There are three types of hazards that pose a threat to public health: physical, chemical and biological.

Hazards		Examples
Physical hazards	Associated with the presence of foreign objects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Foreign objects such as wood, glass or metal chips from damaged tools or utensils.● Accessories worn by food handlers, hair or plasters.
Chemical hazards	Occur when chemicals are present in food at levels that can be hazardous to humans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Natural toxins, mycotoxins, pesticide residues● Detergents, sanitising agents, bleaching agents, and insecticides used in food premises
Biological hazards	The main hazards are microorganisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bacteria, yeasts, moulds, viruses and parasites



To prevent foreign objects from falling into food, you can:

- Keep food covered.
- Repair or replace any equipment or utensils that are damaged or have loose parts.
- Avoid using brittle equipment or utensils.
- Discard any unneeded food packaging promptly into the trash bin.
- Remove all accessories before preparing food.
- Tie up hair or wear a hair net.
- Change the plasters regularly.

For more about food allergens, please [click here](#).

Food contamination

There are three types of food contamination: primary, direct and cross-contamination.

1. Primary contamination

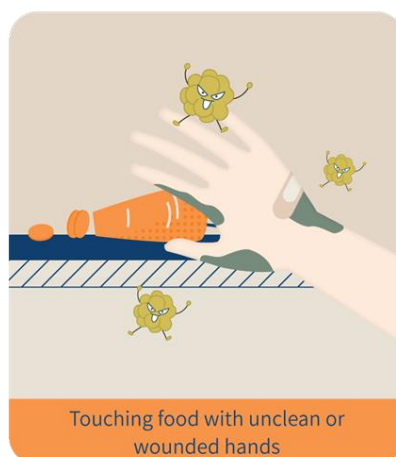
Occurs in primary food production processes such as harvest, slaughter, collecting, milking and fishing. An example is:

- The contamination of eggs by a hen's faeces.

2. Direct contamination

The contaminants affect the food when the person handles it with direct contact. This is the most common type of contamination. Some examples are:

- Sneezing over food
- Touching food with unclean or wounded hands



3. Cross-contamination

The contamination is caused by the transference of a hazard present in a food to another food which is safe via the surfaces of utensils that have contact with both without requisite cleaning and disinfection. Some examples are:

- Handling food with the same pair of gloves after handling garbage and using the phone
- Wiping kitchen utensils with the same cloth after using it to wipe the tables without disinfection



- Delivering food after handling cash without washing hands
- Using the same knife and cutting board for both raw meat and cooked food

