

Healthier choices for older people

Once again, the issue of meeting the nutritional needs of older adults (65+) is under the spotlight. A recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection found that nearly half of 100 hospitals it visited were failing to provide good nutrition to elderly patients.



There are particular challenges for healthy eating in this age group, with older people more likely to be less active, be overweight or underweight and have low vitamin and mineral intakes. This is why the Healthy Choice Award has developed specific standards for residential

care homes and new caterers' guidance for older adults.

Eating healthily in this setting focuses on providing food which is appealing and easy to eat, ready access to drinks to avoid dehydration, and offering nutrient dense foods. There are currently no nutritional standards for care homes in the private sector – so the nutritional advice from the Healthy Choice Award Co-ordinator is proving popular with managers and caterers. Recent applicants for the award have taken a number of steps to increase healthy menu choices in their care homes by following Healthy Choice recommendations. These include replacing stodgy puddings with more fruit-based desserts and milky puddings; increasing oily fish (eg offering sardines on toast and mackerel) and making more home-cooked options such as vegetable soups for suppers and making cakes and biscuits with less sugar, more fruit and wholemeal flour.

To find out more about the Healthy Choice Award, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/healthychoice or call the Food Safety Team on 01273 292161.

Winter vomiting bug

Norovirus, better known as the winter vomiting bug, is the most common stomach bug in the UK, affecting people of all ages. It is highly contagious and causes vomiting and diarrhoea. Unfortunately without a positive faecal sample, it is impossible to say for certain what is causing the illness, so Norovirus is often mistaken as food poisoning.

Precautionary measures

- Wash hands regularly and thoroughly with hot water and soap, especially before preparing food and after using the toilet.
- Regular and thorough cleaning procedures for hand-contact surfaces such as taps/toilet handles/light switches etc.
- Where any member of staff is suffering from sickness and diarrhoea, it is extremely important that they do not return to work until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.
- Staff training and vigilant monitoring are essential.

It is important that businesses take Norovirus seriously because word of mouth from customers telling their friends could affect trade. Businesses should try to get details of what and when customers ate, when symptoms started, who else was in their party and if others were unwell. If anyone approaches your business complaining of such symptoms, you should advise them to contact their doctor and provide a faecal sample. If you suspect an outbreak, or if a customer complains to you, contact the Food Safety Team on 01273 292161.

Kitchen safety

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) now has a dedicated webpage for kitchen safety, including frequently asked questions on which laws apply to the catering and hospitality industry.
www.hse.gov.uk/catering/faqs.htm

Edible glitter – to eat or not to eat?

The Food Standards Agency (FSA), in partnership with local authorities, is investigating a number of cases of non-edible cake decorating materials which are described as dusts or glitters. The products are actually non-edible coloured plastic particles which are marketed in a way that may lead purchasers to use them incorrectly. The labeling does not always make it clear that these products should not be consumed and so they could end up being eaten by accident. These glitters should only be used as non-edible finishes for decorations which will be removed before the cake is eaten.

For more information, go to www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/enforcement/enfe11035.pdf

Halal foods project

Trading Standards have carried out a survey to determine the accuracy of Halal meat descriptions. Halal is an Arabic word that means 'permissible'. In terms of food, it means that the food has been produced according to certain rules in Islamic law.

The Food Safety Act 1990 sets out requirements for describing food, so it can be an offence to sell meat labelled as Halal which does not conform to the above definition.

There are three major bodies in the UK and many others in Europe who inspect premises and give their approval to relevant traders and their working practices. However, the minimum standards required by these different bodies vary widely and there is no legal requirement for a

manufacturer or wholesaler to register with an accredited Halal organisation.

There are numerous outlets in Brighton and Hove selling Halal meat and meat products. Trading Standards organised a meeting with interested parties of the Muslim community to discuss their concerns about meat being wrongly described as Halal. Trading Standards Officers then visited wholesale and retail premises selling Halal meat in Brighton and Hove and inspected documentation associated with the food.

One retailer selling fresh Halal meat was unable to substantiate through invoicing and packaging the validity of the description. Investigations showed that the meat was unlikely to be Halal and there was a communication issue between the retailer and wholesaler which led to this problem.

Trading standards officers also took samples to check the composition, see the article on the next page about the meat products survey for their findings.

Trading Standards concluded that the Muslim community, when trading amongst its members, displays a high degree of honesty and integrity in this matter. However, the results of the project also show that there is some confusion about the exact definition of Halal within the community. The EU recently rejected a proposal to define the word Halal for inclusion in UK legislation.

Update on National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme



The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is working with local authorities to encourage as many of them as possible to adopt the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), so that consumers can compare hygiene ratings of food businesses in their local area and further away from home.

More than 170 councils are already operating the scheme and the Agency anticipates that by summer 2012, about 95% of authorities in England (including most of the London boroughs) will be signed up to the FHRS. Brighton & Hove

City Council will be changing over from the local Scores on the Doors scheme to the national rating system in March 2012. There will be a phased transfer, with new certificates and window stickers being issued to food businesses which are inspected in the lead up to the launch date in March. The new scheme is slightly different to Scores on the Doors and it will be extended to include a wider range of food businesses. Letters will be sent out over the next few months to all businesses eligible to be in the scheme and there will be updates on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/scoresonthedoors.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme helps consumers choose where to eat out or shop for food by providing information about the hygiene standards in restaurants, pubs, cafés, takeaways, hotels and other places to eat, as well as in supermarkets and other food shops.

You can search for information about hygiene standards at restaurants, takeaways and food shops at www.food.gov.uk/ratings



In areas where the scheme is running, each food business is given a food hygiene rating on a scale from 0 to 5 when it is inspected by a local authority food safety officer. The top rating is '5' – which means the hygiene standards are very good. The bottom is '0' – which indicates urgent improvement is required.

When customers eat out or shop for food, they should look for a sticker like the one below, showing the food hygiene rating for that business. It might be displayed in the window, on the door, or as a certificate.

Food inspections

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has published the food enforcement activity undertaken by local authorities, showing how many inspections have been carried out. Go to www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/foodsafety to see how Brighton & Hove compares with other councils. Brighton & Hove City Council compares well against the other 55 English Unitary Authorities. With just under 88% of all food business being deemed 'broadly compliant', the city council is up there with the better performing local authorities, and was one of only six which completed 100% of their annual programme of inspections.

"The great inspection results reflect the hard work carried out by the Food Safety Team to help businesses, and protect both residents and visitors to the city" said Councillor Ben Duncan.

Meat products survey - are consumers getting what they expect?

A recent survey carried out by Trading Standards services in the south east revealed that consumers may be in for a surprise when they buy their sausages.

It was found that a significant percentage of meat products contained meat that was not declared to the purchaser.

Examples included pork sausages that also had beef in them, pork and leek sausages which contained some chicken and beef and lamb mince which also included chicken.

Over 100 samples were taken for the survey from a variety of premises including butchers, fast food outlets and restaurants. Foods sampled included sausages, kebabs and burgers. Of these, nearly 20% of samples failed as they were found to contain meat that was not included in the description of the food to the customer. Half of the failed samples were sausages.

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Meat products survey - are consumers getting what they expect? cont'd

Most of the failures could be attributed to adulteration of the product or carelessness with how the product was described. There were no problems found in Brighton & Hove.

Traders have been advised on their legal obligations to take care with preparation of products and the descriptions they apply to them and are strongly advised to contact their local Trading Standards service if they have questions about their process or products.

Safe salads and vegetables

Consumers are reminded to wash salads and vegetables following E coli outbreaks in Europe. In the summer of 2011, an outbreak in Germany involving more than 3,000 cases of E.coli O104 infection was eventually linked to sprouted fenugreek seeds. Cases were also reported in a number of other countries, including France.

www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2011/sep/washveg

Information

For information and advice regarding food and safety news or any articles in it, please contact the following numbers:

Food Safety
01273 292161

Health, Safety & Licensing
01273 294429

Trading Standards Business Advice
01273 292523

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

We welcome your views about Food & Safety News - please send comments to:

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