



Environmental Health Risk Management and Infection Control *for* Tourism Businesses

Department of Health and Human Services, Tasmania

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About this guide

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has developed this guide to help tourism businesses manage both environmental health risks and general infection risks (particularly gastroenteritis).

This guide contains both recommendations and legal requirements for tourism businesses. While it is not a legal requirement to comply with the infection control measures outlined, they are guidance for best practice and DHHS recommends that tourism businesses use them. This guide also clarifies the areas of a business that must be managed under Tasmanian law to control environmental health risks. These areas include: food safety, drinking water quality and swimming and spa pool water quality.

Being prepared to deal with general infection risks, and in particular, outbreaks of gastroenteritis, can help in reducing the effects of illness on both guests and the tourism business. Outbreaks of gastroenteritis can occur where people are in close contact with each other, and have occurred at venues offering tourism accommodation, school camps, weddings, and conferences. When an outbreak occurs at a remote tourism facility, limited phone coverage, access to medical facilities, pharmacies and other important services can make managing illness even more difficult.

What should I do about preventing and managing illness?

When one person is unwell it is usually a minor issue, but when a number of people become unwell, the effect on your business can be far greater. To minimise the impact:

- Understand and implement your legal responsibilities to manage environmental health risks in: food safety, drinking water quality and swimming pool and public spa water quality at your site. Access the Environmental Health Risk Checklist

for Tourism Facilities for more detail at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/environmental_health

- Build capacity into your everyday business activities and operating plans to prevent and respond to illness. It is important to be prepared.
- Practice good infection control and have a planned response. This will help prevent and limit the extent of an outbreak.
- Document your infection control measures and response plans in an Outbreak Prevention and Management Plan. While there is no legal requirement under the *Public Health Act 1997* in Tasmania for tourism businesses to do this, we encourage you to do so.
- Use the information about infection control measures in this guide as a basis for your plan. Many cruise ship, bus coach and tourism accommodation operators already have plans in place to reduce the risk of the occurrence and spread of illness.

Having a plan benefits the whole tourism industry

Having an Outbreak Prevention and Management Plan in place will:

- Help create a consistent approach throughout the tourism industry in preventing and managing illness
- Increase the capacity of businesses to self-manage when guests and staff are unwell
- By preventing infection and the spread of illness it will help maintain Tasmania's reputation as a pristine tourism destination.

Keep all staff informed and trained

Make sure staff understand your plans and their responsibilities.

Talk to staff about your Outbreak Prevention and Management Plan when they first start work in your business. Give them a copy of the plan and time to read it as part of their induction process or you may prefer to go through each part or only some parts of it with them.

- A key message for all staff is that if they have symptoms of gastroenteritis, tell their supervisor. It is recommended that staff do not return to work until 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.
- If staff do continue to work in a food premises, they must only undertake duties that do not involve food handling and take all practicable measures to prevent contamination. This is a legal requirement and is detailed in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Standard 3.2.2 view this information at www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Ensure all food handling staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge they need to do their work. This is also a legal requirement and is detailed in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Standard 3.2.2 view this information at www.foodstandards.gov.au
- All food handlers must be trained in safe food handling practices. Contact your local council Environmental Health Officer to check if they offer training. Completion of all 'I'M ALERT' modules also fulfils this requirement. 'I'M ALERT' is a free online training package, visit www.imalert.com.au to access.

- Ensure staff maintaining swimming pools and public spas at your site have the appropriate skills and knowledge to do so. Ensure managers understand their legal responsibilities to comply with the Recreational Water Quality Guidelines. View this information at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/about_us/public_health_act2
- If you are a private water supplier, ensure staff involved in managing the supply have the appropriate skills and knowledge to do so. Having documented procedures in place will help you and your staff to achieve this. Ensure managers understand their legal responsibilities to comply with the Tasmanian Water Quality Guidelines. View this information at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/about_us/public_health_act2



A key message for all staff is if they have symptoms of gastroenteritis, tell their supervisor. It is recommended that staff do not return to work until 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

Preventing infection

Good hygiene and basic infection control practices help to reduce the risk of spreading germs. While they were originally developed for use in health care and are known as Standard Precautions, these precautions can be used in many settings and are appropriate for use in the tourism industry. Making infection control procedures part of everyone's routine will reduce the risk of spreading illnesses between staff and visitors.

Causes of infection

Infections are caused by micro-organisms (or germs) which are not visible to the naked eye. Microorganisms include viruses, bacteria, protozoa and fungi. Many can survive and multiply on and in our bodies. Some can survive and multiply in the environment, including on food and in water.

Germs can be transmitted in various ways depending on the particular germ:

- Directly between people via coughing and sneezing, or by blood or body fluids that come into contact with broken skin or mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth or eyes.
- Indirectly via surfaces, items, food or water that are contaminated with germs.

Germs enter the body by being breathed in, being swallowed or via damaged skin or mucous membranes.

Different infections are transmitted in different ways and cause different infections. For example, hepatitis C is transmitted via blood from a person with hepatitis C that comes into contact with another person's blood; flu is transmitted when a person inhales the flu virus that has been sneezed or coughed into the air by a person with flu.

This document provides some general infection control advice on preventing infections that are spread via different methods and gives some specific advice on how to manage an outbreak of gastroenteritis.





Some facts: Gastroenteritis in the community

- Gastroenteritis is a common illness in the community and there are many different microorganisms (or germs) that can cause gastroenteritis. When a person becomes unwell with signs and symptoms of gastroenteritis, there is no immediate way of knowing the exact cause.
- Symptoms of gastroenteritis vary with the microorganism that is causing the illness but common symptoms include vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Some types of gastroenteritis, especially viral gastroenteritis, spread easily and quickly from one person to another, especially if an ill person does not wash their hands very well after going to the toilet or handling soiled linen.
- The germs that cause gastroenteritis can be spread easily from dirty hands to surfaces (for example a door knob or kitchen bench), food, drinks, kitchen utensils and other objects an ill person touches.
- You can then catch gastroenteritis simply by touching the contaminated object and then touching your lips or mouth, or consuming food/drinks that are contaminated.
- Viral gastroenteritis can spread quickly in places like cruise ships, care facilities, accommodation facilities and other settings where people are in close contact.
- An outbreak of gastroenteritis is defined as two or more people in a given location developing vomiting and/or diarrhoea within a 24 hour period.

Infection prevention and control measures

The following infection control measures provide advice for tourism/hospitality operators on:

- Hand hygiene
- Cough and respiratory etiquette
- Personal protective equipment – gloves, aprons etc
- How to clean up blood and body fluid spills
- How to dispose of used needles and syringes, discarded needles and syringes and discarded used condoms
- How to handle and wash laundry
- Procedures for staff working in both food handling and housekeeping areas
- Managing an outbreak of gastroenteritis.

Hand Washing

Washing hands physically removes dirt and germs. It is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infection.

It is a legal requirement under the *Food Act 2003* that food handling staff and food business operators comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. Standard 3.2.2 of this code – Food safety practices and general requirements, provides details on hand washing. View this information at www.foodstandards.gov.au

All staff must wash their hands:

- When their hands are visibly dirty
- After going to the toilet
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking or smoking
- After contact with blood or body fluids
- After removing gloves and after handling waste.

Food handling staff must wash their hands:

- Whenever their hands are likely to be a source of contamination
- Before they start handling food
- Before working with ready-to-eat food
- After taking breaks
- After handling raw food
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking or smoking
- After going to the toilet
- After touching their hair, scalp, or a body opening.



Washing hands physically removes dirt and germs. It is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infection.

How to wash and dry hands

Wash hands:

- With soap (preferably liquid soap) and warm running water.

Dry hands with:

- Single use paper towel.

Hand sanitiser is not a replacement for liquid soap and does not replace hand washing. Hand sanitiser does not break down the dirt beneath which germs continue to grow.

Cough and respiratory hygiene

Covering your mouth and/or nose while coughing or sneezing stops you from spreading respiratory secretions, that may contain germs, into the air.

How to practice cough and respiratory hygiene

- Cover your nose/mouth with disposable single-use tissues when coughing, sneezing, wiping and blowing your nose.
- Dispose of tissues in the nearest waste bin after use.
- If no tissues are available, cough or sneeze into your inner elbow rather than your hand.
- Wash hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.



Hand sanitiser is not a replacement for liquid soap and does not replace hand washing.

Personal protective equipment – gloves

Wear non-sterile, disposable, single use gloves to protect yourself from contact with body fluids such as blood, vomit, urine and faeces. It is still important to remember that they do not replace the need for hand hygiene (washing and drying your hands).

Perform hand hygiene immediately before putting on and immediately after removing gloves.

- Dispose of gloves immediately after use.
- Situations where gloves will be required are:
 - Cleaning up a blood or body fluid spill
 - Cleaning a contaminated area during and after a gastroenteritis outbreak
 - Dealing with a person who is actively bleeding (ie a blood nose or laceration) or having symptoms of gastroenteritis.

Personal protective equipment – aprons

Wear non-sterile, single use, disposable aprons to protect yourself and your clothes from contact with body fluids such as blood, vomit, urine and faeces.

Perform hand hygiene immediately before putting on and immediately after removing an apron.

- Dispose of the apron immediately after use.
- Situations where an apron will be needed are:
 - Cleaning up a large blood or body fluid spill
 - Cleaning a contaminated area during and after a gastroenteritis outbreak
 - Dealing with a person who is actively bleeding (ie a blood nose or laceration) or having symptoms of gastroenteritis.

Management of blood or body fluid spills

Overview

Manage all body fluid spills safely and promptly by cleaning and disinfecting to ensure visitors and staff do not have contact with the body fluid.

Body fluids dealt with in this procedure include blood, vomit, urine and faeces.

Follow this procedure when cleaning up a body fluid spill of blood, vomit, urine or faeces.

Required equipment

- Disposable gloves.
- Disposable apron.
- Disposable paper towels.
- Bucket and mop.
- Detergent and water.
- Bleach – 25mls of household bleach (four per cent available sodium hypochlorite) added to 975mls water (about two tablespoons of bleach mixed with four cups of water).
- Vomit control absorbent powder (for vomit on carpeted areas only).

Indoor impervious surfaces like floors, benches, tables

- Put on disposable gloves.
- Put on disposable apron.
- Wipe up the spill using disposable paper towels.
- Place used paper towels in plastic waste bag.
- Clean area with detergent and water:
 - If using paper towels, dispose of used towels in waste bag
 - If using mop and bucket, wash both with detergent and water followed by soaking with bleach solution for 30 minutes and then rinse and leave to dry.
- Wipe over the surface with bleach solution, and leave to dry.
- Remove gloves, then apron and wash and dry hands.

Outdoor surfaces – like grass, asphalt, gravel

- Put on disposable gloves.
- Put on disposable apron.
- Remove any solid material using paper towels and dispose of used paper towels into waste bag.
- Remove disposable gloves and dispose of into waste bag.
- Seal waste bag and dispose of into general waste.
- Hose down the area to remove any remaining residue.
- Wash and dry hands.

Carpeted areas

- Put on disposable gloves.
- Put on disposable apron.
 - For vomit - apply vomit control absorbent powder to soiled area and wipe up the powder and absorbed fluid using disposable paper towels and dispose of into waste bag
 - For all other body fluids – wipe as much of the spill up as possible using disposable paper towels and dispose of used paper towels into waste bag.
- Remove disposable gloves and dispose of into waste bag.
- Seal waste bag and dispose of into general waste.
- Wash and dry hands.
- Steam clean carpet as soon as possible.



Disposal of used needles and syringes, discarded needles and syringes and discarded used condoms

- All used needles and syringes, discarded needles and syringes or used condoms found on the property need to be disposed of safely.
- Do not recap used or discarded needles.
- Do not touch a discarded needle or syringe with your hands.
- Ensure staff understand the procedure for safe disposal of discarded needles, syringes and condoms.
- Place used and/or discarded needles and syringes into a sharps container that complies with either of the following Australian Standards - AS 4031-1992 Non-Reusable Containers for the Collection of Sharp Medical Items used in Healthcare Areas, or AS/NZS: 4261-1994 Reusable Containers for the Collection of Sharp Items used in Human or Animal Medical Applications. These containers are yellow

coloured, rigid-walled containers and labelled with the Black Biological Hazard symbol and clearly labelled as 'Biohazard'.

- Glass bottles or jars are not recommended for use as sharps disposal units because they can break.

Disposal of used needles and syringes

A person using any needle and syringe for medical purposes is responsible for the safe disposal of the used equipment into an Australian Standard compliant sharps container.

- Examples of medical procedures where a needle and syringe are used in the community are:
 - Self administration of a subcutaneous injection of insulin
 - Self administration or emergency administration of adrenaline.

Disposal of discarded needles and syringes

Required equipment

- Disposable gloves.
- Sharps container.
- Forceps or tongs.
- Sink with detergent and water to wash forceps or tongs.
- Paper towels.

Disposal process

- Place sharps container next to needle and/or syringe.
- Remove lid from container.
- Put on disposable gloves.
- Using tongs pick up the needle and/or syringe and place into sharps container.
- Seal container.
- Remove disposable gloves and discard into waste bin.
- Wash and dry hands.
- Contact contracted waste company to pick up and replace used sharps container.
- Wash tongs with detergent and water and allow to air dry or dry with paper towels.
- Replace the used sharps container.

Disposal of discarded used condoms

Required equipment

- Disposable gloves.
- Plastic waste bag.
- Tongs.
- Sink (but not a kitchen sink) with detergent and water to wash tongs.

Disposal process

- Place waste bag next to the condom.
- Put on disposable glove.
- Using forceps or tong, pick up the condom and place into waste bag.
- Remove gloves and place into bag.
- Seal bag by tying.
- Dispose of bag into general waste.
- Wash and dry hands.
- Wash tongs with detergent and water and allow to air dry or dry with paper towel.



Handling and washing laundry

Laundering reusable linen in a tourism accommodation facility is defined as a commercial laundry service. If you provide this service, handle laundry in accordance with the 'Australian Standard AS/NZS 4146:2000 Laundry practice'.

AS/NZS 4146:2000 provides information about:

- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Handling soiled linen
- Facilities and equipment
- Laundry operation
- Collection, loading, storage and sorting of linen.





Precautions for staff working in both food handling and housekeeping

- There can be an increased risk of the spread of infection when staff work in more than one part of a business. For example, staff may have a housekeeping role in the morning and then help with food preparation or food service in the afternoon. Germs can be spread by touching surfaces and food with germs on them in one area and then touching surfaces in another area of the business.
- It makes sense that when staff work in more than one area of the business, staff should ensure that infection prevention measures are followed.
- When a staff member's roles includes both food handling and other roles they must:
 - Wash and dry hands before entering the area of the facility that is part of a food business.
 - Comply with all legal requirements for hand washing and food handling as detailed in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.
 - Take all appropriate steps to prevent the likelihood of food and food contact surfaces being contaminated.
 - Clothing, hair and exposed skin for example can be a source of physical, biological and chemical contamination. This is because substances that staff come into contact with in one area of the business may dislodge from hair/clothing/skin onto food surfaces.
 - Appropriate steps to prevent contamination may include changing clothing and covering your hair.
 - View this information at www.foodstandards.gov.au



There can be an increased risk of the spread of infection when staff work in more than one part of a business.



When staff work in more than one area of the business, staff should ensure that infection prevention measures are followed.



Managing a gastroenteritis outbreak

How to recognise an outbreak

An outbreak of gastroenteritis is defined as two or more people, whether they are guests or staff, who develop vomiting and/or diarrhoea within a 24 hour period.

As soon as you think an outbreak is occurring, call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738 for advice.

Important immediate steps

- Remind staff if they are suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting to tell their supervisor.
- Staff should not return to work until 48 hours after their last symptoms.
- Should these food handling staff continue to work on the site, ensure their duties do not include food handling and that they do take all practicable precautions to prevent food becoming contaminated. This is a legal requirement and is detailed in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Standard 3.2.2. View this information at www.foodstandards.gov.au
- Use a sickness log sheet to record the details of both guests and staff who become unwell.

 *An outbreak of gastroenteritis is defined as two or more people, whether they are guests or staff, who develop vomiting and/or diarrhoea within a 24 hour period.*



If you think an outbreak is occurring, call the Public Health Hotline on 1800 671 738 for advice.

Additional steps

You may also:

- Remind staff of good hygiene and hand washing procedures.
- Ensure cleaning staff are not involved in other work duties during an outbreak, especially food handling and food service.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitising surfaces that are frequently touched. This may include handrails, door handles, lift buttons, light switches, shared toilets and baby change tables.
- If providing self-service buffets, consider alternate arrangements.
- Remove any snacks and nibbles from communal areas.
- Ask guests that are unwell to stay in their rooms.
- Ensure a sufficient supply of drinking water. If there is a risk that your usual supply is not of drinking water quality, or might have become contaminated, provide an alternate source. Eg bottled water or drinking water supplied from a registered water carrier.

For more information

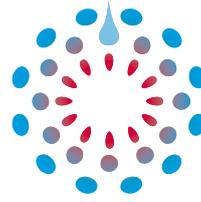
Department of Health and Human Services

www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/about_us/environmental_health_services

Public Health Hotline – Tasmania 1800 671 738 (free call).

A council Environmental Health Officer.

HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS PROPERLY



**FOOD
SAFETY
INFORMATION
COUNCIL**

Always wash and dry your hands before handling, preparing and eating food and after touching raw meat, fish, shell eggs or chicken, using the toilet, changing nappies, blowing your nose and touching a pet. Don't touch sores, wounds and cuts when handling and preparing food.

1

Wet your hands and rub together well to build up a good lather with soap as the suds help loosen the bugs. Do this for at least 20 seconds and don't forget to wash between your fingers and under your nails. You might have to use a nail brush.



2

Rinse well under running water to remove the bugs from your hands.



3

Dry your hands thoroughly on a clean towel or paper towel for at least 20 seconds (a hand dryer may take longer).



You can time 20 seconds by singing "Happy Birthday To You" (but perhaps not out loud!)

The Food Safety Information Council is Australia's leading disseminator of consumer-targeted food safety information and a health promotion charity.

For more information see www.foodsafety.asn.au



CONTACT US

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