

Here's how to...

Prepare for a Health Inspection



Nothing raises the blood pressure quicker than the health inspector walking through your doors. The 30 seconds it takes for the health inspector to reach your kitchen area is simply not enough time to make those last-minute corrections. To consistently follow safe food handling practices—and keep your heart rate normal—adopt the strategies below... before, during and after a health inspection.

Before the Visit

The key to a successful health inspection is to be ready *at any time*. Conduct weekly inspections with your employees using the QSCE form. Access the form on KTEC Online (<http://ktec.kahalamgmt.com>) under the "Operations" heading.

- Before your inspection, walk into your establishment from the outside to get an outsider's first impression.
- After you have inspected your store, hold a 10-minute team briefing to review any problems and develop an action plan to correct them. This step will help convey the importance of food safety, store systems and preparedness.
- Food temperature is a top priority during health inspections. Check product temperatures at 3 points: 1) when products arrive, 2) when products are stored (e.g., in cooler) and 3) when products are served. Checking product temperatures regularly will reduce the chance for food-borne illness outbreaks by 70%.
- Reinforce the importance of hand washing by posting a Hand Washing Procedure Card at each hand washing sink. Download the procedure card from KTEC Online under the "Operations" heading. "Employees must wash hands" signs must be posted in each restroom. Purchase these signs from any office supply store.
- Ensure that employees have up-to-date food safety training. Inspectors often quiz managers and employees to gauge their knowledge of food safety and preparation processes. ServSafe food safety training programs for managers and employees are available at a discount on KTEC Online (click on "Vendors" to be directed to the ServSafe site).

Regular use of checklists and forms creates systems that set your store up for Health Inspection success!

During the Visit

Be advised that inspectors usually arrive unannounced, so be ready at any time—even during peak hours. Don't panic when an inspector arrives. Think of it as a learning opportunity that will benefit your operation by making it as safe as possible.

- Ask to see the inspector's credentials first.
- Do not refuse an inspection. The inspector will likely get an inspection warrant that you can't refuse and the examination will be even more thorough.
- Tag along with the inspector. Take notes of any violations found. This gives you the chance to correct simple problems on the spot and the inspector will note your willingness to fix problems. Also, inspectors will point out good habits.
- Do not offer food or any other item that can be misconstrued as an attempt to influence the inspector's findings.
- Ask the inspector to explain their findings and offer suggestions on areas that need improvement. Do not take things personally. Rather than dwelling on every violation the inspector finds, correct the mistakes and strive for a better inspection the next time. Even the cleanest restaurants sometimes contain health-code violations.

After the Visit

Take action! Address any issues and examine your systems and processes to prevent the issues from occurring again.

- Fix critical violations on the spot. Critical violations are those directly related to food-borne illnesses. If they are not corrected immediately, your customers can become sick. For violations that can't be remedied on the spot, set a time frame for correction; the inspector will most likely perform a follow-up inspection for critical violations that require more time for correction.
- Fix small problems during the inspection to let the inspector know you are willing to work with him or her.
- If you don't understand the violation, ask the inspector to explain. Don't be confrontational. Your health inspector should be your ally. He or she can save you from the devastation of a food-borne illness incident.
- Part of a health inspector's job is education. If your facility is lacking in a specific area of safe food handling, arrange a date and time for the inspector to come back and give your employees a food safety lesson. This will help ensure that your customers and employees have a healthy, enjoyable experience in your establishment.