

Outbreak Management Procedure (Food Poisoning)

Food poisoning may be suspected because staff are ill (particularly with vomiting, diarrhoea or both), because more than one patient in a ward becomes ill or because indistinguishable isolates from staff or patient are identified in the microbiology laboratory. Remember that some food poisons are toxins which may cause unusual symptoms.

Staff must report episodes of diarrhoea and/or vomiting to Occupational Health. Diarrhoeal stool specimens should be sent to Microbiology for examination either directly from the place of work or via Occupational Health. Indicate clearly on the form that the specimen is from STAFF, so that confidentiality can be preserved.

If food poisoning is suspected

- In a ward patient: the **Nurse-in-charge** should report to the Infection Control Team
- In a staff member: **Occupational Health** should report to the Infection Control Team

Individual staff are encouraged to report directly to the Infection Control Team. (Refer to the lines of communication for your hospital)

Action to take

The Infection Control Team will investigate the suspected outbreak. If preliminary investigations confirm the suspicion, the following will be notified:

- Consultant in Communicable Disease Control or nominated Proper Officer
- Unit Manager / Chief Operations Officer for site
- Unit Catering / Hotel Services Manager for site
- Unit General Manager
- Local Public Health Laboratory Director

These or their delegates will form the nucleus of a flexible **ad hoc committee** to decide on further action to be taken. Chairman will be appointed by the committee at the time. General Manager or deputy will be secretary, and will deal with Press liaison. Where appropriate, the following may be co-opted into this committee:

- Senior Medical Staff
- Senior Nursing Staff
- Representative from CSSD
- Representative from Central Stores
- Representative from Laundry
- Representative from Pharmacy
- Engineer

If appropriate, help will be requested from the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre (Health Protection Unit) at an early stage. This will enable proper and efficient epidemiologic studies to be carried out.

Also see www.infectioncontrolservices.co.uk/food_poison_intro.htm for additional information.

