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HYGIENE IN CATERING

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HYGIENE IN CATERING

One aspect of hospital catering of vital importance is to maintain a high standard of hygiene. It is unthinkable to question the standard of hygiene maintained in certain departments of the hospital, such as the theatres, but in many cases the standard of the kitchens, serveries, etc., leaves much to be desired, and in some instances it is extremely low.

Apart from the importance of making hospitals free from any possible outbreaks of food infection, however small, it is valuable that an example should be set in this sphere to the commercial and industrial world.

The catering service provided for patients, resident and non-resident staff, means that hospitals are officially classified under the general term "Catering Establishments." In fact, they have a greater responsibility than many of the commercial or industrial establishments, for they have a virtual monopoly. Patients certainly have no choice but to eat in the hospital, and the same applies to the resident staff, and in a lesser degree, to the non-resident staff.

To maintain the best hygienic standard, catering staff must be given proper facilities to carry out hygienic practices, such as washing up in two sinks with adequate hot water of a sufficient heat to avoid the use of drying cloths, and practise personal hygiene such as washing the hands after visiting the toilet.

Education in hygiene is most important, as the most hygienic lay-out and equipment will be of little use if the staff fail to observe the simple rules of hygiene in the preparation and service of food.

Attention is drawn to the Report of the * Catering Trade Working Party, under the Chairmanship of Sir William Savage, which was issued in January. This Report is commended to those responsible for the standard of hygiene in hospitals, and this Circular is issued to assist hospitals, where necessary, to maintain a satisfactory and highly desirable standard of hygiene in stores, kitchens, serveries, etc.

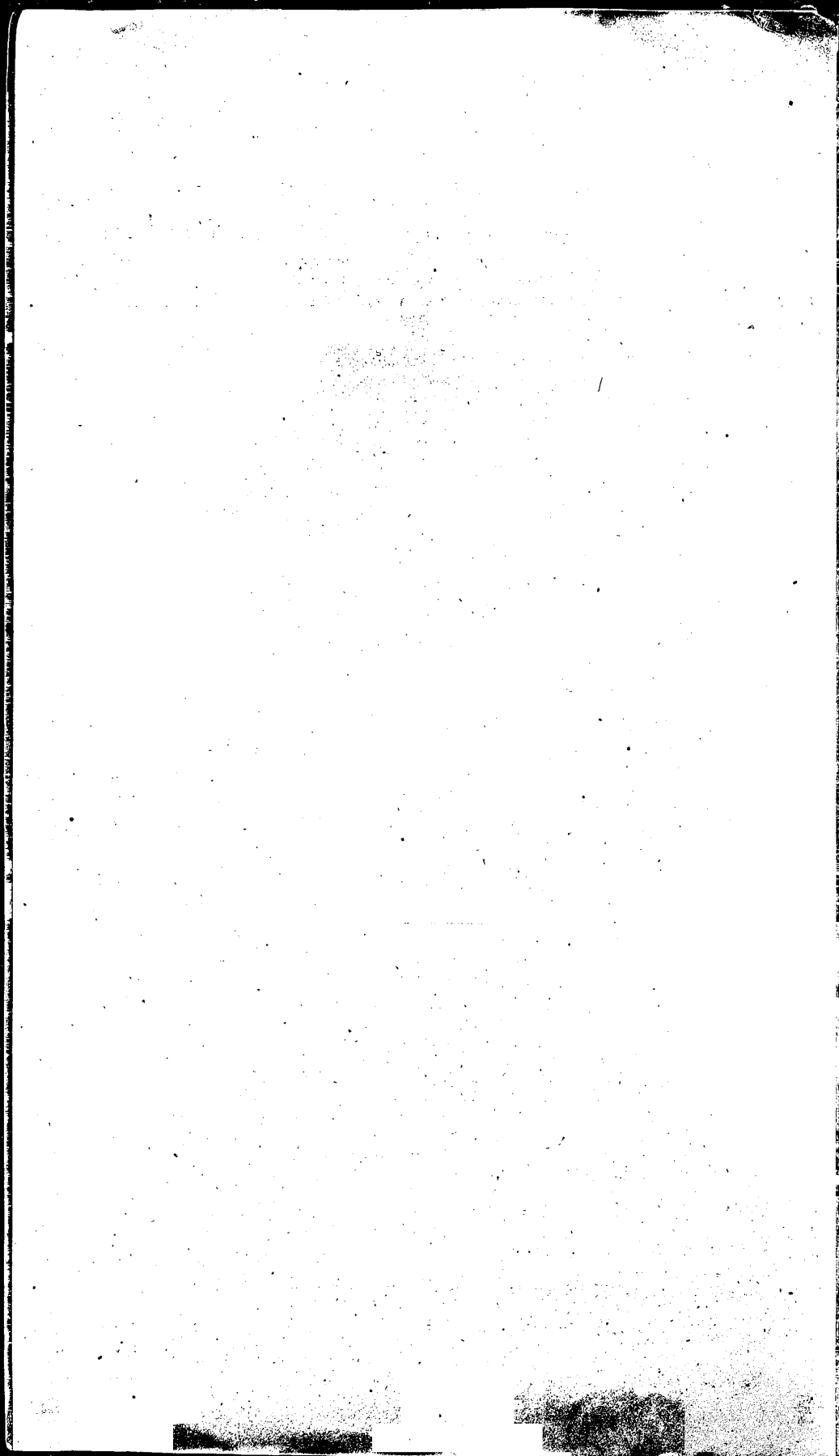
CATERING CIRCULARS ALREADY ISSUED:

- (1) CHRISTMAS CATERING, 1950
- (2) USE OF THE MEAT RATION
- (3) CARE OF CATERING EQUIPMENT
- (4) COST OF PROVISIONS

24/26, London Bridge Street,
London, S.E.1.

April, 1951

* "Hygiene in Catering Establishments." Published by H.M. Stationery Office.



1. FOOD INFECTION

This Circular is primarily concerned with the basic conditions and requirements necessary to eliminate the danger of food infection, and reference to the various forms of illnesses which result from infection have been omitted. It is sufficient to record that even the mildest infection is, to say the least, uncomfortable, and serious cases can result in death. It should be the constant aim of those employed in handling and serving food to maintain a standard of hygiene which will ensure the safety and well-being of both patients and staff.

2. CAUSES OF FOOD INFECTION

There are four main causes which have to be guarded against:—

(a) The introduction into the Catering Department of food already infected.

This can be avoided to a great extent by correct buying and careful inspection of all commodities received.

(b) The infection of food from a member of the catering or other staff, who is carrying harmful bacteria on the skin or in the bowel.

This can only be overcome by ensuring that all personnel employed within the Catering Department carry out hygienic practices and obey a simple code of personal hygiene.

Fatal cases of food poisoning have occurred from infection of food by germs from a sore on the finger of a cook.

The washing of crockery, cutlery, glassware, kitchen utensils and food containers must be carried out under proper conditions, and items subjected to heat sterilisation (170° F.), thus avoiding the use of drying cloths.

(c) The contamination of food from infected animals, including rodents and flies.

Constant vigilance is necessary to prevent the infiltration of rodents, and flies. Special attention should be given to the proper disposal of swill. Containers should be stored in fly-proof areas, which can be washed down.

Animals, such as cats and dogs, should not be allowed in any part of the premises used for the storage, preparation or service of food.

(d) The keeping of food under improper conditions, so that gross multiplication of bacteria, originally present in small numbers, occurs.

Adequate cold storage and cool larder accommodation is essential for the correct storage of cooked food.

It is important to note that food infected with small numbers of food poisoning organisms may be harmless if eaten soon after preparation, but it will be highly infective or toxic if the organisms are allowed to multiply, by keeping the food in a warm atmosphere for a number of hours.

3. PREVENTION OF INFECTION

The number of outbreaks is very small in comparison with the number of meals and beverages served, but particularly in hospitals even a small isolated outbreak is a serious matter, and a serious reflection on the hospital concerned.

A satisfactory standard of hygiene in the kitchens, dining-rooms, serveries, etc., is an important safeguard against food infection. It is stressed that a satisfactory standard means much more than purely preventing infection, as certain commendable practices are carried out for æsthetic reasons only.

Owing to financial and building restrictions in force at the present time, many hospitals may find difficulty in reaching a high standard, but all should be able to maintain a standard which will ensure clean food. The basis of hygiene is cleanliness, and even old buildings and equipment can be kept clean and the staff educated to practise personal hygiene.

4. CODE OF PRACTICE

The Report of the Catering Trade Working Party recommends two codes to practice:—

- (i) **The Standard**, which contains essential requirements only.
- and (ii) **The Target**, which contains comprehensive requirements, and is the target at which all should aim.

Hospitals must set a standard beyond reproach, which will be an example to the Catering Industry, and nothing short of the Target Code should be entertained.

A high standard will always require patience to attain, and unceasing vigilance to maintain.

THE TARGET CODE

A. THE WORKING PREMISES

1. The whole of the premises and fixtures should be so constructed and fitted that all parts of both premises and fixtures are capable of being readily cleansed.
2. **Premises :** The premises should be large enough for an orderly sequence of work without undue crossing of traffic lines.
3. **Cooking Equipment :** The cooking equipment should be so sited that wall areas adjacent thereto, and the equipment itself, are readily accessible for cleansing.
4. **Floors :** The floors should be free from cracks without open joints, impervious, non-slip and capable of being easily washed down.
5. **Walls :** The walls should be substantial, durable, smooth, impervious, washable and of a light colour.
6. **Ceilings :** The ceilings should be dust proof and free from cracks.
7. **Repair :** All premises should be maintained in sound repair and every precaution taken against infestation from vermin.
8. **Drainage :** Gullies outside and in close proximity should be trapped. All yards should have impervious and even surfaces, and should be properly drained.
9. **Water Supply :** An adequate supply of wholesome water piped to taps over sinks, lavatory basins and other appropriate fixed receptacles should be provided.
10. **Hot Water :** Apparatus to provide hot water up to at least 170° F. for all requisite purposes should be installed.
11. **Lighting :** All parts of the premises used for food preparation should be adequately lit, preferably both by natural light and by artificial light.
12. **Ventilation :** Adequate ventilation should be provided. Where a system of artificial ventilation is not installed an adequate flow of fresh air should be maintained.
13. **Cloakrooms :** Clean and adequate cloakroom accommodation should be provided for the staff distinct from but preferably adjacent to the food preparation rooms.
14. **Sanitary Conveniences :** There should be a sufficient number of sanitary conveniences to meet the needs of the staff. Each convenience should have an adequate supply of toilet paper, and should be well lit, ventilated and kept clean.
15. **Washing Facilities :** There should be a sufficient number of wash basins in immediate proximity to the sanitary conveniences, and elsewhere as may be necessary to meet the needs of the staff. In addition a wash basin should be fixed in the kitchen itself, or immediately adjacent thereto. (Kitchen sinks should not be used for hand washing). All wash basins should be well lit, with hot and cold water laid on, and should be kept clean. Soap, nailbrushes and towels (for non-common use) should be provided. (An efficient air-dryer is a satisfactory substitute for towels).

B. EQUIPMENT

1. Adequate and suitable covered receptacles of impervious material for refuse, food scraps and the like with a suitable and sufficient storage place for them should be provided outside all food preparation rooms.
2. There should be proper receptacles constructed of impervious material for all foods broken down from bulk. All except those for vegetables should have covers.
3. There should be a cool larder of adequate size for the storage of foods, particularly those of a perishable nature.
4. The surfaces of tables and benches should be impervious to liquids and without open cracks.

5. There should be separate and adequate storage for all utensils and, in particular, covered racks for crockery, trays for cutlery and suitable shelving for saucepans and small cooking vessels.
6. There should be a separate sink or sinks for vegetable preparation.
7. Ventilated hoods, or adequate alternative means for the removal of steam, fumes, intense heat from grillers, etc., should be provided wherever required.
8. Adequate equipment for cleansing and sterilising utensils should be provided. Where a dish washing machine is installed it should be worked efficiently and provide for the thorough cleansing of utensils and for their sterilisation.* For hand washing of utensils the minimal provision should be:—
 - (a) a sink or sinks (according to the size of the establishment) for the washing of utensils, with hot and cold water laid on;
 - (b) a separate sink or sinks for sterilising, each furnished with its own supply of water which can be kept at a temperature of not less than 170° F., by steam injection or otherwise, with automatic devices for recording temperature; sterilisation in a steam chest if adequately carried out may be accepted as an alternative. In a small establishment a two-compartment sink for washing and sterilising respectively may be used instead of two separate sinks, provided that the necessary device is available for recording the temperature; or sterilisation can be effected by simple steaming in a suitable vessel;
 - (c) metal racks with handles to hold utensils for immersion in the sterilising sink.
9. There should be adequate shelves, hooks, or racks, to receive utensils for air drying.
10. There should be reserves of glass, crockery and cutlery to ensure:—
 - (a) the prompt replacement of chipped, cracked or bent equipment;
 - (b) that during rush hours there is no need to use inadequately sterilised equipment.
11. A sufficient supply of overalls of light colour, caps, "rubbers" and other personal equipment should be provided.
12. Where large containers are used for conveying meals (as in central kitchens for schools) a steam jet (or jets) should be provided with steam available under adequate pressure. The lids as well as the containers need to be sterilised. An adequate time of steaming is essential, and a clock with a large minute hand should be provided adjacent to the steam jet. Adequate sterilisation in steam chests or in tanks containing boiling water may be accepted as a substitute in special cases.
13. There should be a reliable refrigerator or cold room of size adequate for the establishment, provided with an easily visible means of recording the inside temperature. (A cold room is one which is capable of maintaining food at a temperature not above 40° F.).
14. Wrappings or covers or protective glass screens for food on display should be provided.
15. First-aid equipment should be available on the premises.

* The word "sterilisation" throughout the Code is not used in the strict bacteriological sense of complete freedom from all living bacteria and spores, but as meaning freedom from harmful bacteria in an active form.

C. MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. The management should assign to a designated individual responsibility for checking the condition of all food delivered to the establishment and for taking action if it is considered unsatisfactory.
2. Perishable articles (milk, meat, etc.) should be kept in the larder adequately covered, or in the refrigerator or cold room, until required for use.
3. Manual handling of food should be avoided, so far as practicable.
4. Smoking while preparing or serving food should be prohibited.
5. Animals should be excluded from rooms where food is being prepared. At no time should animals have access to the food in the establishment.
6. Nothing should be stored on the premises which is not directly concerned with the work of the establishment.
7. All cooking vessels and other equipment should be maintained in a state of thorough cleanliness and repair and all smaller utensils (saucepans, etc.) kept in their proper places when not in use. Particular care should be taken to maintain the linings of copper cooking utensils in such condition as to prevent direct contact between foodstuffs and the copper.
8. Premises should be maintained at a high standard of cleanliness. This involves washing floors at least once a day, supplemented by sweeping, using damping agents, as often as may be necessary and cleaning all walls and other surfaces at least once a week. All cupboards, drawers and other fixtures should be kept scrupulously clean and free from all articles other than those for which they are intended.
9. A high standard of personal cleanliness on the part of the staff should be maintained. Overalls and other personal equipment should be washed and changed sufficiently frequently. Waiters should preferably wear washable jackets.
10. A notice pointing out the importance of washing the hands after use of the sanitary convenience should be kept affixed in a prominent place in every convenience.
11. So far as practicable all food preparation should be done the same day as the food is consumed. When this is not practicable all partially prepared food should be stored immediately after preparation in the refrigerator or cold room and not removed until required to complete final preparations. The only exception is that of a hot food of large bulk (such as a joint), which should be allowed to cool down in a clean place before being placed in the refrigerator or cold room. Rapid cooling of foods in bulk is so important that suitable methods to ensure it should be employed, such as division into smaller portions and cooling in a current of air provided by a fan.
12. So far as practicable, left-over food should not be used again, but, if it is to be used, it should be stored promptly in the refrigerator or cold room.
13. Made-up and other prepared foods should always be stored in the refrigerator or cold room without delay after preparation. To keep them at room temperature is dangerous.
14. When food is stored in the refrigerator it should be placed so as to allow air circulation. Meat joints are preferably hung from hooks. The refrigerator should be kept clean and thoroughly cleaned out on the occasion of each defrosting.
15. Detergents used in connection with utensil cleansing should be suitable for the conditions existing and should be used in correct strength. The local authority should be consulted as to the appropriate detergents to use.

16. **Vermin and Flies**

Rats and Mice : Infestation by rats and mice is dangerous as they can spread infection to man. All practicable steps should be taken to eliminate this source of infection. It is essential:—

- (a) to maintain the premises in thorough repair and to stop all ascertainable means of rodent access;
- (b) to ensure that all food scraps are promptly removed and the premises maintained at a high level of cleanliness;
- (c) to provide impervious receptacles with tightly fitting covers for the storage of all foods attractive to rodents;
- (d) to consult and seek the help of the local authority if rats or mice are found in substantial numbers.

Flies, Cockroaches and other Insects : The number of flies on the premises can be materially reduced by the rapid and efficient disposal of all food scraps and by using flyproof covers for food to the fullest possible extent. Manure or refuse piles or other materials serving for fly breeding near to the catering establishments should be reported to the local authority. The presence of cockroaches and other insects in numbers is often evidence of faulty fixing of plant and of inadequate hygienic practices. Thorough cleanliness and the provision of proper food containers are important preventative measures. The local authority should be consulted if the presence of these pests continues. When insecticides are used great care should be taken to prevent the contamination of food, equipment and utensils.*

17. **Measures to limit the infection of food from food handlers:—**

- (a) No person who is suffering from a discharging wound, sores on hands or arms, discharging ears or who is suffering from attacks of diarrhoea or vomiting should take part in the handling, preparation, or serving of food in any catering establishment.
- (b) Members of the staff should report to the proprietor or manager if they are suffering from any of the conditions specified in (a) above, or from any other illness.
- (c) The proprietor (or manager) of a catering establishment should take reasonable steps to become aware of the existence amongst his staff of any of the conditions specified in (a) above or of any other illness.
- (d) The proprietor (or manager) of a catering establishment, as soon as he becomes aware that any member of his staff is suffering from any of the above specified conditions, should not permit such person to handle food until he (or she) is no longer suffering from the condition in question, or permission has been given by the Medical Officer of Health.
- (e) In the case of the other illnesses, if there is a doubt whether the employee should continue to work, the employee should be referred to his (or her) doctor pending resumption of work.
- (f) Every applicant for employment should be informed of the possible risk from previous attacks of typhoid fever or paratyphoid fever and should be asked if he (or she) has previously suffered from one of these diseases. If he (or she) has so suffered, particulars should be reported to the Medical Officer of Health and the applicant not engaged until approval has been given by the Medical Officer of Health.

18. Adherence to the hygienic requirements in this Code alone is not enough. It is of prime importance that all members of the staff (management and workers) should be imbued with and continually practise the principles of sound personal hygiene and that they should take full advantage of any suitable courses of instruction which are available.

* No recommendation is made on the detailed use of insecticides since no finality as to the best methods has yet been reached.

NOTES ON THE CODE

- Ref. A. The Working Premises refer to the Stores, Kitchens, Serveries.
- No. 10. This does not refer to the normal hot water supply, but should be achieved by local means.
- Ref. B. Utensils refer to crockery, cutlery, etc.
- No. 8. This applies to the washing up for patients and staff.
In the case of infectious wards, particular sterilisation will be necessary.
The kitchen wash-up for pots and other utensils will require similar equipment as outlined in a, b, and c.
- No. 9. This will also apply to the kitchen wash-up for pots, etc.
- No. 12. This does not refer to the normal food trolleys used for wards.
The main point is the length of time a large quantity of cooked food is kept and transported in containers.
- Ref. C. "Management" refers to the person in charge of the Catering, i.e., Catering Officer.
- No. 16. Attention should also be given to proper flyproofed swill areas, with water point and drainage.
- No. 18. Special attention is drawn to the importance of education.



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