

Public Health Authority

Instructions for employees in the food sector subject to Section 43 paragraph 1 No. 1 Infection Prevention Act [Infektionsschutzgesetz]

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

Pathogenic microorganisms can replicate in food easily. If people consume food that contains pathogenic microorganisms, they can become very ill indeed. If such food is sold or served in restaurants or at communal facilities, a **very large number of people** can be affected.

For this reason, if you have illnesses that are caused by certain pathogenic microorganisms, you should not work in the food sector.

What illnesses are these?

They are **the following**:

- Typhus, paratyphus, cholera, shigella, salmonella and other contagious diarrhoea infections.
- Hepatitis A or hepatitis E
- Infected wounds or skin disease, if there is a possibility of germs from them being transmitted to food.

How are these illnesses recognised?

Only your doctor can tell you whether or not you have one of the above diseases. There are, however, **certain symptoms** that indicate the illnesses and are easy to recognise. Such symptoms are:

- Diarrhoea (with three or more watery stools a day)
- High fever with severe headache, stomach ache and joint pain and diarrhoea or constipation.
- Yellowing of the skin and the eyes, light stool, dark urine
- Wounds or open places derived from skin diseases that are reddened, smeary, weeping or swollen.

What must you do if you observe such signs of illness on yourself?

If you yourself notice one (or several) of the symptoms, you must cease all engagement in the food sector. Consult your doctor. Tell him that you work on the food sector. You must also inform your employer immediately!

Any failure to inform your employer or any continuation of your engagement despite the symptoms carries a **penalty of up to 25,000 EUR or imprisonment for up to 2 years. In the case of spread of diseases imprisonment might go up to 5 years.**

One can excrete pathogenic microorganisms without even feeling ill!

Certain germs can still be excreted for a considerable length of time, even though **no symptoms of the disease** exist any more:

- Salomonella
- Shigella
- Cholera vibrions
- Enterohemorrhagic escherichia coli

The physician can see from the stool specimens whether you are excreting these microorganisms. **You may not carry out the above-specified activities** for as long as microorganisms can be detected in your feces!

Shouldn't one work at all, if one is excreting pathogenic microorganisms or presenting one of the specified symptoms?

The working prohibition **only applies to the food sector**. In other words, if your health permits, you may indeed work **in other areas** (e.g. in the office).

What does "food sector" mean?

The food sector covers all activities:

- a) in kitchens of restaurants and other catering or communal facilities
- b) in the production and treatment of food or in bringing foodstuffs onto the market
- c) and – most important - incorporates all activities in which there is contact with food only over commodities if there is a risk for contamination (e.g. when cleaning cutlery).

How can you help to prevent foodborne infections?

Hygienic measures can prevent the transmission of pathogenic microorganisms. You can help by following a **few simple rules**:

- **Before starting work or any new work process and after each visit to the toilet and before and after meals, wash your hands thoroughly with liquid soap from a soap dispenser under running water. Use disposal towels to dry your hands.**
- **Before commencing your work, remove rings (including wedding rings) and watches**
- **Wear clean protective clothing**
- **Never cough or sneeze onto food**
- **Cover small clean wounds on hands or arms with water-resistant plaster**

What are the duties of the employer?

- Your employer may only employ you in the food sector after you have presented the **Certificate** from the Public Health Authority.
- **Once you have taken up your activities, your employer is bound to instruct you again and to repeat such instructions every two years.** The employer has to provide written evidence that you have been duly instructed.
- The employer has to keep evidence of the respective instructions last given **at the place of work** together with the Certificate and be able to present them at for control purposes.