

Why kitchen hygiene is not only important in canteens and restaurants but also at home

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Kitchen hygiene is not only about avoiding relatively minor gastrointestinal illnesses like self-limiting diarrhoea. Among high-risk groups including small children, expectant mothers, very old people or

people with weakened immune systems, a food-borne infection can cause lasting damage and even prove fatal under certain circumstances. The improvement of kitchen hygiene is therefore a matter of vital importance for the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR).

To reduce the number of food-borne infections, information is required on the foods involved in food-borne outbreaks and on their production and treatment. The Member States of the EU submit data on food-borne outbreaks every year to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The 2016 EFSA report on zoonoses and food-borne outbreaks in Europe shows that the majority of the 521 strong-evidence outbreaks was caused by the consumption of food in private households (205 outbreaks), followed by outbreaks caused by the consumption of food in restaurants (133) and communal catering facilities, such as canteens in kindergartens and schools, nursing homes and hospitals (87).

Improper handling of food can favour the outbreak of disease. According to the outbreak investigations, the major sources are meat and meat products, and in particular, poultry meat (126 outbreaks), as well as mixed food and buffet meals (85 outbreaks), eggs and egg products (72 outbreaks), fish and fisheries (70 outbreaks) and milk and milk products (45 outbreaks). Although vegetables, fruits, cereals, sprouted seeds, herbs and spices and their products made a much less significant contribution to the [outbreak](#) situation with a total of 34 outbreaks, they should not be disregarded.

However, the 14,504 cases of food-borne disease in strong-evidence outbreaks recorded in Europe only partly reflect the food-borne infection situation in

Above all, salmonella was the dominating causative agent of strong-evidence outbreaks reported by the EU Member States, whereas outbreaks caused by Campylobacter, Listeria monocytogenes and other

food-borne pathogens are in the minority. However, regarding the individual cases of disease caused by [food-borne pathogens](#) reported to the public health authorities in Germany (approx. 100,000) and the European Union (approx. 360,000) in 2016, a completely different picture results: *Campylobacter* was the main cause of the reported cases of illness in Germany (approx. 74,000 cases) as well as in the EU (approx. 250,000 cases).

The risk of food-borne infections can be minimised through consistent compliance with the rules of good kitchen hygiene in both professional environments and private households.

The BfR has published related leaflets with general tips for avoiding food-borne infections in private households as well as information on individual pathogens. These are supplemented by flyers for professional applications available in several languages.

Provided by BfR Federal Institute for Risk Assessment

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