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Cross-Contamination and Safe Handling of Retail Seafood

Cross-Contamination

Cross-contamination is the transfer of illness-causing bacteria and viruses to cooked "ready-to-eat" seafoods. These seafoods include cooked crabmeat, cooked shrimp, smoked seafoods, and surimi-based simulated seafood products. Cross-contamination can occur from:

- raw seafood to cooked seafood
- equipment or utensils to cooked seafood
- seafood handlers to cooked seafood
- the environment to cooked seafood.

The following tips will help avoid cross-contamination:

Safe Handling of Raw Seafood and Equipment

1. Proper display or storage of seafoods is done in such a manner that raw and cooked seafoods are physically separated. This can be accomplished by separate refrigerated units and the use of barriers.
2. Place seafood in washable, non-insulated containers rather than directly on the ice. Display containers should allow liquids to drain.
3. Store cooked seafoods in sanitary containers marked only for that use.
4. Clean and sanitize knives and cutting boards between processing raw and cooked products. Ideally, separate equipment and working areas would be used for raw and cooked product.

5. Empty seafood display cases daily and remove old ice. Clean and sanitize display cases and drains before adding fresh ice and restocking.
6. Handle seafood in the display case with individual utensils or single-use sanitary materials. Store utensils in a sanitizing solution or inside the refrigerated display case.
7. Place spiked price tags in garnish or ice, but not in seafood.
8. Keep the surface of the weigh scale sanitary. Protect the scale by placing seafood on single-use paper or plastic material. Clean and sanitize scale if any food comes in contact with the surface.
9. Clean up spills with single-service towels. Do not use cleaning cloths or sponges which may contain unwanted bacteria.

Seafood Handlers

1. Wear separate outerwear when handling raw and ready-to-eat fish products. Clothing can spread unwanted bacteria to seafoods. Wear clean outer garments and avoid use of aprons.
2. Wear a hair net or hat to keep hair from falling onto and contaminating seafoods. Hair contains millions of bacteria.
3. Always work with clean hands. Avoid touching your face, nose or clothing. Wash **and sanitize** hands between handling raw and cooked seafoods, between handling money and food, and whenever they touch anything other than seafood. Dry your hands with single-use paper towels.

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4. Do not handle seafood if you have unprotected cuts or sores. Infected cuts and sores often contain illness-causing bacteria.
5. Use sanitary gloves when handling raw and cooked seafoods. Separate gloves are used for each. Wash and sanitize your gloves every time they touch anything other than seafood.
6. Sneeze and cough into a tissue and away from seafood. Never smoke, eat or drink while handling seafood.
7. Remove watches, rings, and jewelry, which may carry unwanted bacteria.
8. Inform your supervisor if you are ill.

The Environment

1. Insects and rodents carry illness-causing bacteria and must be eradicated if found in a seafood establishment.
2. Store garbage and processing wastes in sealed containers away from display areas.
3. Purchase seafoods from reputable wholesalers. Confirm bivalve molluscs have been processed through a federally registered facility.

***For further information
please contact your Fish
Safety Officer (604.707.2458)
or your local Health Authority***