



# Procedures for suspected food poisoning on board

Food poisoning can be caused by chemical agents (a chemical product that was inadvertently mixed with the food), physical agents (a foreign body that was inadvertently dropped in the food), or biological agents (viruses, bacteria, toxins or by-products of bacteria, parasites).

Most cases of suspected food poisoning in a passenger or crew member are caused by biological agents and therefore by food usually consumed before the flight because of the incubation time required for many of these agents.

However, it is possible that a passenger or crewmember becomes sick as a result of food eaten on board. If this situation is suspected by a passenger and/or a cabin crew member, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Provide first aid;
2. Notify the cabin crew in-charge (i.e. purser, flight service director, etc.);
3. Call the medical ground provider if your company has one, and/or ask if there is a physician on board. Follow the instructions of the medical professionals concerning patient care/preventive measures;
4. If food poisoning is considered unlikely, then crew should refer to the guidelines on suspected communicable disease (<http://www.iata.org/whatwedo/safety/health/Pages/diseases.aspx>);
5. If the diagnosis of food poisoning is likely OR no professional assessment of the situation is available then all of the following apply:
6. Keep a sample of the suspected food item(s);
  - Wrap and label item(s)
  - Store items in the refrigerator to prevent further deterioration
  - Place foreign matter in a sealed bag and store in the refrigerator
7. Document the incident as per company procedures and include specifics such as:
  - Contents of meal served;
  - Description of any foreign matter found in the meal;
  - Any food preparation completed on-board e.g. chilled/non-chilled stowage, time and temperature controls;
  - Time of food consumption;
  - Time of symptom onset;
  - Other customers and/or crew affected;

- Ask any affected customers and/or crew members to complete the airline's suspected food poisoning questionnaire (if available).
8. If surfaces have been contaminated by body fluids, clean/disinfect those surfaces according to hygiene and safety regulations;
  9. When possible, designate a specific lavatory for the exclusive use of the ill traveler(s). If not possible, clean and disinfect the commonly touched surfaces of the lavatories (faucet, door handles, waste bin cover, counter top) after each use by the ill traveler(s);
  10. Notify the captain. Since this situation could also represent a suspected communicable disease, he/she is required by the International Civil Aviation Organization regulations (ICAO Annex 9, Chapter 8, and paragraph 8.15) and the World Health Organization International Health Regulations (WHO IHR 2005, Article 28(4)) to report the suspected case(s) to air traffic control. If surfaces have been contaminated, also remind the captain to advise the destination station that cleaning and disinfection will be required;
  11. Affected passenger(s) or crew member(s) in general should not be allowed to leave the aircraft on arrival at the destination until clearance has been given (by Port Health) and medical follow up arranged;
  12. Hand over the suspected food item(s) or foreign matter to the Customer Service Manager at the first of your stations where food analysis can be done and prearrangements have been made.