

*It is important to remember that inspections of food establishments are a snapshot in time. What occurs during an inspection today may be different than what occurs in the establishment tomorrow.*

## Food Service Establishment Inspection Processes

- **What types of inspections are there?**
  - **Routine inspections:** Routine inspections evaluate the food handling practices and adequacy of the establishment. The adequacy of the establishment refers to the food establishment as a whole, and refers to items such as equipment and cleanliness. Each establishment is inspected 1-3 times annually, depending on the permit type that they hold.
  - **Follow-up inspections:** Follow-up inspections are used to recheck any problems that were identified in a routine inspection, and occur as many times as needed until problems are sufficiently corrected.
  - **Complaints:** When we receive complaints about a food establishment, we address them either immediately or during the next inspection. When we choose to address the complaint depends on how critical the violation and how urgent the complaint is.
    - **Critical violations** have a high potential to make someone sick, such as barehand contact with ready to eat foods or an ill food worker continuing to work with food.
    - **Non-critical violations** have a low potential to make people sick, but contribute to the overall adequacy of the establishment, such as dirty floors. Although dirty floors are gross, they don't contribute to the safety of the food itself.
- **How often are food inspections done?** Each food establishment is *routinely* inspected one to three times per year, depending on the type of permit they hold. For instance, bakeries are inspected once per year, full-service restaurants will be inspected twice per year, and mobile units (also known as food trucks) are inspected three times per year. Food establishments are categorized by the types of foods that they serve and their food preparation processes. Higher risk foods and processes are inspected more frequently.
- **Are standards set by the local, state or federal government?** KPHD has adopted the Washington State Retail Food Code ([Washington Administrative Code 246-215](#)) as well as the Kitsap Board of Health Ordinance 2014-01, which are local ordinances.
- **Are inspections scheduled or are they a surprise?** We perform unannounced inspections except under special circumstances. An example of a special circumstance is when we need to inspect a permit holder who does not operate regularly, such as a caterer.
- **Do restaurants always have the same inspector?** Usually. Inspectors are assigned specific areas, which is imperative to building crucial working relationships with establishments. From time to time, inspectors' areas might change for various reasons, such as staff changes, fluctuating workloads, or to get fresh eyes in food establishments.
- **How long does each inspection take?** The time it takes to perform an inspection varies and depends on numerous factors such as how big the establishment is, the complexity of food handling processes, whether there are violations that must be corrected on the spot, and how busy the establishment is. In general, it takes about 20 to 90 minutes for each inspection.



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- **How does the District ensure consistency between inspectors?** We are enrolled in the Federal Drug Administration’s Program Standards, which is a multifaceted and rigorous program that drives our Food Program to be consistent with other food inspection programs in the nation. Additionally, inspectors constantly communicate food safety issues to each other and ensure that they’re being addressed similarly in each geographical area.
- **When do you close a restaurant?** We close food establishments for only one reason- Being a threat to public health. This could mean that:
  1. The food workers have poor control over their food safety practices. For example, they’ve allowed their food to stay in a broken or unmaintained refrigerator.
  2. Something is happening within the establishment that is out of workers’ control. An example of this is the powering going out during a storm.
- **What is a “good” score?** We consider a good score to be 100%. Don’t think of it like a test score in school because school grades and restaurant grades are not comparable. We encourage you to focus on the violations instead. Please see our section “how to interpret a food establishment inspection report” to gain a better understanding of the score and the violations.
 

**Do food establishments have to post their scores in their restaurants?** Food establishments aren’t required to post their scores for public viewing, but they are required to post their inspection reports for their staff to read. While we don’t require food establishments to post their scores or inspection reports, we do it for them! Kitsap Public Health is committed to transparency between the public and our inspections. The public has access to the full inspection report on our website, which can also be accessed [here](#)
- **What should I do if I have a concern or complaint about a restaurant?** Inspectors cannot be in food establishments every day. We need you to be our eyes and ears when we aren’t there. If you see something concerning in regards to food safety, we’d love to hear about it. To submit a concern or complaint about a food establishment, you can:
  - **Submit [online](#).**
  - **Call us:** Call Kitsap Public Health’s main line at 360-728-2235 and ask for the Food “Inspector of the Day”.
- **I got sick at a restaurant and called the Health District – but the restaurant wasn’t shut down.** When we receive a notification from someone that they got sick in a food establishment, the first thing we do is to see if the symptoms and incubation period (time it takes from someone eating to the onset of symptoms) match with the time and type of food eaten at the implicated establishment.

It is very common for someone to think that they got sick from the last place that they ate; however, this is not feasible in most cases because the onset of symptoms is too short to have been caused by the implicated establishment.

If we do think that foodborne illness came from an establishment, we investigate in conjunction with our public health nurses and the Washington State Department of Health Food Safety Program. Other entities may be consulted as necessary. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, various controls maybe implemented to protect public health. Examples of controls include, but are not limited to, discarding food, a higher level of cleaning and sanitization, restricting food workers to particular duties, restricting use of specific equipment, and temporary closure.



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# FOOD SAFETY

- **I see restaurants that have good scores but they suddenly close. Why?** The establishment may have done well on their inspection, but would need to close in instances when an imminent health hazard occurs. A lot of things can happen that are outside of an establishment's control, such as an electrical outage during a storm or sewage backing up. In the cases of imminent health hazards, establishments are bound by law to close on their own. If they close on their own, inspectors do not file an inspection report and their score is not affected. If they do not close on their own, inspectors will implement a forced closure and an inspection report will be filed that reflects this. If we close a restaurant due to an imminent health hazard, the report will not have a score but will indicate closure due to imminent health hazard.

**What if I still don't understand something and have a question?** Contact us! We're happy to help you understand our reports and our actions. Call the Kitsap Public Health District's main line at 360-728-2235 and ask for the Food "Inspector of the Day", or send an email to [dayna.katula@kitsappublichealth.org](mailto:dayna.katula@kitsappublichealth.org).



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