

Frequently Asked Questions

Food Poisoning

What to do if I have been feeling unwell after a meal purchased from a Tower Hamlets food business?

If you have not done so already you should contact your GP as soon as possible. They will probably ask you to provide a stool sample to try and establish the type of food poisoning you may have. From this it may be easier to identify the type of food that may have caused the illness.

It is often thought to be the last meal eaten that causes the illness, however food poisoning can result from food eaten from anything between a few hours ago, up to several days prior to the onset of symptoms.

If you have concerns about a specific business, [report it to us](#).

[Read more on food inspections and food regulations](#)

Allergen requirements

What are businesses' requirements with regards to allergens information?

Food businesses operators in the retail and catering sector are required to provide allergen information and follow labelling rules as set out in food law.

If you eat out or order a takeaway meal, the food business must provide allergen information in writing. This could be full allergen information (for the [14 allergens](#) that need declaring by law) on a menu or a written signpost explaining how you can obtain this information, for example by speaking to a member of staff (source: Food Standards Agency).

If you have concerns that a business is not meeting legal requirements, [report it to us](#).

If you are a food business; full guidance on how to comply is available from the [Food Standards Agency website](#).

How to report an allergic reaction after a meal in a TH food business?

If you feel ill or have a reaction to your meal, make sure you seek medical help immediately.

NHS Choices has information on [what to do in the event of an allergic reaction \(Opens in a new window\)](#).

If you have concerns that a business is not meeting legal requirements, [report it to us](#).

Starting a new food business

What do I need to get started?

You must register your food business with us using the online tool available from our [registration page](#). You must do this at least 28 days before starting your business.

By law, you should also have a documented food safety management system. This is a documented analysis of the hazards to food in your business based on HACCP principles. The easiest way to comply with this part of the law is to download and complete a [Safer Food Better Business pack \(SFBB\)](#).

Further information on starting your business is available from the [Food Standards Agency](#) website.

How soon will I get an inspection after registering?

You do not need to wait for our inspection to start trading.

You will need to confirm you have started trading then we will carry an unannounced inspection within the next 3 months.

I am running my business from home, are there any different rules?

The same legal requirements apply however we will convene an appointment giving you at least 24h notice before inspecting your home address.

I want to work with delivery platforms; can I get an inspection quicker?

You do not need to wait for our inspection to start trading.

You will need to confirm you have started trading then we will plan an inspection within the next 3 months. If you do wish your inspection to happen earlier, get in touch with us via our [online forms](#). Although we cannot guarantee that your inspection will be brought forward, we could also change your status to 'awaiting inspection' on the Food Standards Agency's Website. This is often sufficient to get you on board with these providers.

How to notify us when you have started trading?

Fill in our [online form](#) stating:

- Business trading name*
- Business address*
- Registration reference number*

I have a market stall, are there any different rules?

The same basic legal requirements apply.

For information including market stall registration and conditions to get a food hygiene rating, consult the [Food team](#) page.

For information including how to apply for a street trading licence consult the [Markets team](#) page.

Importing foods

How to import foods into the UK?

If you are based in Tower Hamlets and planning to import foods into the UK, a number of specific rules will apply depending on the type of foods you intend to import.

Detailed business guidance on import (and export) is available from the [Food Standards Agency website](#).

[Contact us](#) if you still have queries relating to importing foods.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

How soon will my new rating be published on the FSA website?

We are uploading new ratings every fortnight. However, if your rating is lower than a FHRS 5, there is a 21-day time period from your inspection date during which you can appeal your score. During this time, your rating will not be visible unless you decide to waive your appeal period.

If you decide to do so to get your score published earlier, complete an early publication request from our [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme page](#).

What to do if I disagree with the officer's rating?

If you disagree with the officer's rating, contact them in the first instance so they can explain how the rating was calculated.

If you still disagree with their explanation, complete an appeal form from our [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme page](#).

What to do if I want a new inspection in view to get a better score?

Where food businesses have made improvements to address their issues, they can request a re-inspection with a non-refundable fee of £187. You can ask for a re-rating visit at anytime but once submitting your re-rating request, we have up to three months to carry out the visit.

In order to request a rescoring visit, complete a re-inspection request from our [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme page](#).

