

Food safety advice

Handling Ice Safely



We normally regard ice as a safe ingredient of our food and drinks, however, ice could be a source of viral or bacterial contamination. Ice can become contaminated with bacteria, algae and mould from poor handling and production. It can also become contaminated with foreign material e.g. glass, plastic by poor handling and production

Our last survey of ice from food businesses found that 25% of the ice sampled was below the recommended microbiological standard.

How does ice get contaminated?

- When the water supply itself is contaminated;
- When it is stored in a dirty container;
- When it is produced in an ice machine that is not clean;
- When dust or dirty air comes into contact with the ice; or
- When it is touched by a food handler or customer who has not washed their hands.

Top tips for clean ice

The following list gives some useful tips to ensure that your ice is safe for human consumption:

- Is your water supply safe, for example are there any leaks or is the pipework made of lead or is it very old? Are you sure it comes direct from the mains and not from a storage tank?
- Site the ice machine away from sunlight, toilet facilities and any 'dirty' areas, also avoid poorly lit areas which may make cleaning difficult.
- Clean, disinfect and service the ice machine on a regular basis. Cleaning should include the handles and all internal surfaces of the machine.



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- Ice bought in pre-packed bags should be obtained from a reputable supplier.
- Use a scoop or tongs, NOT hands to handle the ice. When not in use, the scoop or tongs should be stored in a hygienic place.



- Drinking glasses should not be used to scoop the ice as this could be a source of contamination should they break.
- The scoop or tongs should be stainless steel or plastic and cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis.
- The handle of the scoop or tongs must not be allowed to come into contact with the ice.

- Ice buckets should be cleaned and disinfected on a daily basis, be in good condition and the lid kept in place.
- Never store ice buckets inside one another as they then contaminate the inside surface.
- As soon as water begins to accumulate in the bottom of the bucket, the contents should be replaced after cleaning the bucket. Do not re-freezer ice once it has started to melt.



If buying a new ice machine. . . .

Some manufacturers impregnate internal parts of their ice machines with anti-microbial compounds to reduce build up of mould and bacteria. Several offer self-cleaning functions that can be activated when the ice maker requires cleaning. These self-cleaning cycles, however, only clean the evaporator surface where ice is made, so other manual cleaning is still required. The frequency of cleaning will depend on the physical environment of the ice maker and the amount of ice being produced.