

Food Safety Complaints

As part of Huntingdonshire District Council's role in protecting public health, our officers investigate complaints about local food businesses and about the food that they have sold. We receive several hundred complaints each year and prioritise them according to the nature of the complaint and the risk to public health.

We investigate complaints about:

- food which contains foreign bodies, for example metal, glass or plastic (if the food was prepared or made in Huntingdonshire)
- the sale of mouldy and unfit food
- the sale of products past their use-by date
- poor hygiene standards in food businesses, for example poor standards of cleaning, poor hygiene practices, presence of pests, accumulations of rubbish and drainage/sewage problems.

If you suspect that you have food poisoning you should visit your GP and submit a faecal (stool) sample for analysis. When we receive the result we will contact you to make further enquiries. We will only investigate allegations of food poisoning if a faecal sample has been submitted.

We do not investigate:

- complaints about the "quality" of food
- complaints about poor customer service
- complaints about falsely described or incorrectly labelled food and drink
- claims for compensation or refunds
- complaints about dirty customer toilet facilities (unless they are also used by members of staff) or dining areas in food businesses
- anonymous complaints
- complaints about food which wasn't prepared or made in Huntingdonshire. These complaints should be referred back to the business at which the food was prepared or made.

Our colleagues at Trading Standards will investigate:

- labelling issues, including allergen information
- sales of products past their best before date

Cambridgeshire Trading Standards can be contacted at:

Supporting Businesses and Communities,

Sackville House

Sackville Way

Great Cambourne, CB23 6HL

Tel: [03450 455206](tel:03450455206) Email: trading.standards@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

How to make a complaint:

If you would like to make a complaint about a food product or a food business in Huntingdonshire, you should:

- [contact us](#) as soon as possible
- keep as much of the food as possible, including any foreign bodies
- keep any packaging, and the receipt if available
- store the food in either a fridge or freezer to prevent further deterioration
- you may be asked to provide a witness statement to assist with the investigation.

Alternatively you may wish to contact the business concerned to discuss the matter. We recommend that you put your complaint in writing and keep copies of all correspondence. **If you return a product to where it was purchased we will not be able to carry out an investigation on your behalf.**

Each complaint will be assigned to an officer to carry out the investigation. The level of investigation will depend on the nature of the complaint, the risk to public health and whether we've received similar complaints about the same type of food or the same business. The investigating officer will not normally provide feedback after the conclusion of the investigation unless you specifically requested this when making the initial complaint.

Some complaints do not pose a risk to public safety, but nevertheless the nature of the complaint should still not have arisen. In practice, it is best to return the food in question to the manufacturer or the retailer and request a full refund. The following is a list of the most common complaints which should be referred to the retailer:

Bakery Goods:

Bakery char: Occasionally bread and cakes may contain pieces of overcooked dough which has flaked off baking sheets and tins. Char may be dark in colour and usually irregularly shaped.

Carbonised grease: Non-toxic vegetable oil is used to lubricate machinery found in bakeries. Occasionally 'pellets' of oil which may resemble mouse droppings are found in bakery products.

Meat and Poultry:

Skin, bone: Products made from meat or poultry may contain small pieces of bone, skin, hair, bristles or parts of blood vessels. Although unsightly, they are part of the original animal and do not pose a health hazard.

Fish:

Cod worm: white fish such as cod or haddock may be infested with small, round, light brown worms. The worms might not be detected when filleting, but will be killed when cooked and are not harmful to health.

Unprepared Fruit and Vegetables:

Stones, soil, slugs: fruit and vegetables may have soil, stones or small slugs sticking to them. This is quite normal as they come from the soil. Ensure that fruit and vegetables are washed, peeled or scraped before use.

Greenfly: leafy vegetables and salad leaves may contain greenfly, especially if organic, as no pesticides are used during production. Ensure that salad items are washed before use.

Tinned Goods:

Fruit flies: are naturally associated with fruit and may occasionally be found in tinned fruit products. The canning process renders them harmless.

Insects: small grubs and insects may be found in canned vegetables such as sweet corn or tomatoes. Ideally they should not be present but the grubs live inside vegetables and are difficult to detect before processing. The canning process renders them harmless.

Struvite: some naturally occurring elements in fish, particularly salmon, may develop into hard crystals during the canning process. The crystals are frequently mistaken for glass. Struvite crystals will dissolve or reduce in size if gently heated in vinegar for approximately 20 minutes.

Dried Goods:

Insects: dried products such as flour, sugar and pulses may contain very small light grey insects called psocids or book lice. Psocids are commonly found in dark, warm, humid conditions such as kitchen cupboards and do not carry disease.

Chocolate and Confectionery:

Bloom: chocolate may develop a light-coloured 'bloom' commonly mistaken for mould, if it has been stored at too high a temperature. The bloom is due to fat separation and is not harmful to health.

Sugar crystals: large sugar crystals, which can be mistaken for glass, may form in confectionery. The crystals will dissolve in warm water.

Further information can be obtained from:

Food Safety Team
Community Division
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Tel: [01480 388302](tel:01480388302)
Email: food@huntingdonshire.gov.uk
Web: www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk