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NEWSLETTER

THE HIDDEN INGREDIENT IN FOOD SAFETY: WHY MEDICAL TESTING FOR FOOD HANDLERS MATTERS

When you enjoy your favourite meal at a restaurant, grab a snack from a street vendor, or sip a bottle of juice, there's something you may not think about but should: the health of the person who prepared it.

Food safety doesn't begin in the kitchen; it starts with the person behind the counter. That's why medical testing for food handlers is not only a legal requirement but a vital measure to protect public health.



Who Needs to Be Tested?

If your job involves preparing, handling, packaging, or serving any substance meant for human consumption, you fall under this category. This includes, but is not limited to, chefs, cooks, and kitchen assistants; butchers, bakers, and food processors; juice or beer brewers; and oil mill operators, among many others. It is essential to check the Nairobi County Council guidelines to determine if personnel in your industry are required to be tested.

Whether you work in a five-star hotel, a street kiosk or a food factory, if you're handling anything people eat or drink, medical testing applies to you.

Why Medical Testing Is So Important

Even when we feel healthy, it's possible to carry germs that can cause illness in others, especially when it comes to foodborne diseases.

Here's why testing is critical:

1 Silent Spreaders:

Certain bacteria, such as Salmonella or Shigella, can reside in our bodies without causing illness. However, they can easily spread through food, especially when it is not handled with proper hygiene.

2 Outbreak Risks:

Contaminated oils, sauces etc. can cause serious infections, such as botulism or stomach poisoning. A single infected worker can unknowingly cause a wide-scale health crisis.

3 It's a Global Issue:

The World Health Organisation estimates that 1 in every 10 people worldwide falls ill due to contaminated food each year. In a growing city like Nairobi, regular testing helps us prevent outbreaks and keep our communities safe.

What Does the Law Require?

To ensure safety, Nairobi's city regulations are clear and enforceable:

1 Annual Medical Testing:

Under Section 45 of the Public Health By-Laws, all food handlers are required to undergo medical testing and hold a valid certificate confirming they are free from specific infectious diseases.

2 Routine Inspections:

Public health officers regularly inspect businesses to confirm compliance. Non-compliance with certification requirements can lead to serious repercussions for a business. Should staff be found without the necessary valid certificates, the business may incur significant penalties. These can range from substantial monetary fines to the possibility of temporary or even permanent operational closure. Furthermore, the business could face legal prosecution.

3 Visible Certification:

The health certificate must be displayed where it can easily be seen—either at the entrance or in staff areas—to show both inspectors and customers that the establishment prioritises hygiene.

**Let's keep our
kitchens clean, our
communities safe,
and our people
healthy—one test
at a time.**

How This Benefits You

Whether you're a worker or a business owner, testing comes with real advantages:

For Your Health:



Early detection of illness helps you get timely treatment and protects those around you.

For Your Business:



Certified staff reduce the risk of legal issues, lawsuits,

For Your Brand:



Customers trust clean businesses. Displaying medical certificates shows that you care about their well-being, which in turn builds loyalty.

A Shared Responsibility

Medical testing for food handlers isn't about inconvenience or red tape. It's about protecting lives. Every meal, or snack, that reaches the public should be safe, and that safety starts with you.

Whether you're just starting in the food industry or managing an established enterprise, make sure medical testing is part of your routine.

