

## Business Advisory Sheet 5

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### Safe Cooking of Burgers and Minced Meat Products

It is essential that the manufacturer's instructions are carefully followed when cooking burgers and similar minced products. It is particularly important to ensure that these types of products are thoroughly cooked so that they are piping hot throughout. Eating undercooked burgers which are rare in the middle may be dangerous.

#### Barbecues

The cooking process is variable and difficult to control which means it is absolutely vital to ensure that burgers are thoroughly cooked so that they are piping hot throughout. Care needs to be taken when you add raw meat products onto the barbecue whilst cooking. You must ensure that raw products do not touch or drip onto food already cooking as bacteria could spread from the raw meat to the other food and stop it from being safe to eat. Separate utensils must be used for handling raw and cooked products to prevent cross-contamination.

#### Caterers

As a caterer you have a specific legal obligation to identify and control process steps that are critical to food safety. A temperature of 70°C for 2 minutes or 'equivalent' is required to ensure thorough cooking of burgers and other minced meat products. (The equivalent core cooking time/temperature table is contained within Business Advisory Sheet 4).

In practical terms a single probe core temperature of between 75°C - 80°C will be sufficient to ensure thorough cooking. However, caterers must always ensure that they take into account the type of cooking equipment, its operating temperature, the temperature of the meat at the start of cooking and its thickness.

It is very important that caterers consider the potential for undercooked burgers to cause disease and should not provide them to customers or, if specifically requested to do so, should remind the customer of the potential hazard.

#### Training

Verocytotoxin producing *Esherichia coli* (VTEC) infections could be significantly reduced if there was a better understanding of the need to avoid cross-contamination and to cook food properly. It is recommended that commercial food handlers focus training on methods for the safe and hygienic handling of food. Catering establishments should ensure that the staff know precisely what to do and why cooking procedures must be followed.

## **Safe Cooking of Burgers and Minced Meat Products (continued)**

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### **Contact**

For further advice/information please contact:

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