



# FOOD AND DRUGS AUTHORITY

## GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING FOODBORNE DISEASE OUTBREAKS

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**Document No.** : FDA/FSMD/GL-FBD/2012/01  
**Date of First Adoption** : 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015  
**Date of Issue** : 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015  
**Version No.** : 02

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In exercise of the powers conferred on the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) by Part Seven, section 134 subsections 3 of the Public Health Act, 2012, Act 851, these guidelines shall be applied in the event of an outbreak of food borne disease. It outlines procedures for an inter-agency investigation of foodborne disease outbreaks and stipulates control measures to be applied to prevent its spread and recurrence.

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

1. Show actual procedures for the investigation of food borne disease outbreaks
2. Provide a quick and precise means to determine the cause of foodborne disease,
3. Undertake appropriate measures to remove the cause of foodborne disease and prevent further spread of the outbreak.
4. Evaluate all such cases scientifically and objectively

This guideline is hereby promulgated for information, guidance and strict compliance by all concerned.

## 2. GLOSSARY

For the purpose of these guidelines the following definitions shall apply:

***“etiologic food”*** means food which is suspected to have caused food borne disease;

***“etiologic facility”*** means facility from which the etiologic food is suspected to have been prepared/ produced/ manufactured, distributed or offered for sale;

***“food”*** means any article manufactured, sold or represented for human consumption, chewing gum, water and any ingredient of such food or drink, chewing gum or water;

***“foodborne disease”*** means diseases contracted through the consumption of contaminated food. It also applies to disease caused by chemical contaminants, toxins caused by bacterial growth and a variety of organic substances that may be present in natural foods such as certain mushrooms and some sea foods; and

***“survey”*** means a systematic collection of information or data.

### 3. REQUIREMENTS

#### 3.1. FOODBORNE DISEASE OUTBREAK RESPONSE TEAM (FDORT)

- 3.1.1. The Food and Drugs Authority shall collaborate with the Ghana Health Service to form an inter-agency Foodborne Disease Outbreak Response Team (FDORT), for handling outbreaks of food borne disease at the District, Regional and National levels.
- 3.1.2. The Team shall consist of officers with expertise in Epidemiology, environmental health, laboratory analysis, public health, communication etc .
- 3.1.3. Upon obtaining information on an outbreak of foodborne disease or suspected outbreak of foodborne disease, the FDORT shall immediately be activated, conduct its investigations as quickly as possible and submit its recommendations to the Minister of Health.

#### 3.2. ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTROL SYSTEMS

- 3.2.1. In the event of an outbreak the nature and the possibility of further spreading shall be assessed promptly.
- 3.2.2. In respect to section 3.2.1 the Authority shall suspend operations of the facility to prevent further spreading of the food borne disease outbreak.

### 4. PROCEDURES

#### 4.1. INVESTIGATION METHODS

- 4.1.1. On receipt of information on foodborne disease outbreak, an authorized officer shall complete the *Foodborne disease Outbreak Investigation Form* (FDA/FSMD/FM-FBD/2015/02).
- 4.1.2. The officer shall then activate the inter-agency FDORT.
- 4.1.3. All necessary information, food samples and clinical specimens shall be collected immediately after occurrences are reported. This may be done by using the relevant forms from the WHO *Guide for the Investigation of Food borne disease Outbreaks*.

4.1.4. Authorized Officers shall be adequately resourced, protected and assigned to defined tasks in order to establish a functional survey system.

4.1.5. Surveys shall not be limited to persons showing symptoms but extended to those who are not showing symptoms but have also consumed the etiologic food.

#### **4.2. EXAMINATION OF PERSONS**

4.2.1. Food history of the victims shall be ascertained (whether they ate common meals and drinks) and recipes (or menu) for the common meals shall be obtained as early as possible.

4.2.2. Except for cases where the common meals of victims are identified, information on all the food consumed seventy-two (72) hours or more before the onset of symptoms shall be conducted.

4.2.3. Symptoms shown by victims and the dates and time of onset of symptoms shall be noted.

4.2.4. Authorized officers shall encourage victims to visit health facilities so that symptoms can be confirmed.

#### **4.3. EXAMINATION OF FACILITY**

4.4.1. The etiologic facility shall be inspected to ascertain its compliance with current trends of Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) and Good Hygienic Practices (GHP). Recommendations shall be made to the etiologic facility in order to prevent future occurrences.

4.4.2. Officers of the Authority on the FDORT shall examine food contact surfaces and collect the necessary samples for laboratory analysis. This may be done by using the *Sample Collection Form* (FDA/FM05/FPI05/1-2006).

#### **4.4. PRESUMPTION AND DETERMINATION OF ETIOLOGIC FOOD AND FACILITY**

The etiologic food and etiologic facility shall be identified based on a comprehensive assessment of the surveys, laboratory examinations and tests.

- 4.4.1. The Authority shall assess the occurrence of foodborne disease based on diagnosis , number of victims, the extent of occurrence (time, area and group), examination of facilities and results of bacteriological or physicochemical examinations.

#### **45. INVESTIGATION OF DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS**

In cases where the etiologic food has been identified, and has been confirmed to be in trade, investigations of market distribution systems shall be conducted.

### **5. PREVENTIVE/ CONTROL MEASURES**

The following measures shall be taken to prevent the spread and recurrence of foodborne disease:

1. Voluntary suspension or closure of facility
2. Ban on the sale, use and transportation of the etiologic food (and that manufactured in the same lot or similar food), until the etiologic substance is determined.
3. Ban on water used (well water, spring water or water from an elevated water tank), when such water is the suspected cause.
4. In cases where a person engaged in food preparation is a carrier of a communicable disease or causative agent, such as diarrhea or open wounds, such person shall not engage in any work requiring contact with food until the cause is identified and treated.
5. In cases where the etiologic food is found to be in trade, the Food and Drugs Authority shall ensure complete recall of the etiologic food at the expense of the manufacturer/ producer/ food service provider.
6. The general public shall be informed.

#### **5.1. MEASURES FOR THE ETIOLOGIC FACILITY**

- 5.1.1. When current codes of Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) have not been implemented to an appreciable level, the Authority shall ensure that the facility puts in place measures for improvement.  
Personnel of the facility shall be educated on sanitation, good food handling practices, personal hygiene and food borne disease.

## **6. OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE OUTBREAK**

- 6.1. Official announcement on the outbreak shall take into account all the principles of risk communication.
- 6.2. The outbreak and findings of the investigation shall be officially announced, in collaboration with all stakeholders.
- 6.3. When such announcements are to be made for consecutive days, they shall be made at the same time on such days.

## **7. SUBMISSION OF REPORTS**

The FBDC within a period of fifteen (15) working days after investigation shall submit a final report on the outbreak to facilitate further regulatory decisions from the MOH.



FLOWCHART OF HANDLING OUTBREAK OF FOODBORNE DISEASES

