

**Older adults are vulnerable to foodborne illness for several reasons:**

- Their immune systems may not function at full effectiveness.
- They tend to take daily medications that can inhibit immune systems.
- Their health may be compromised by a chronic disease.
- Their declining smell and taste sensors may not alert them to spoiled foods.

**For more information about food safety and other resources for older adults:**

- **Answer Line**—  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline)  
OR 1-800-262-3804  
(Iowa Relay, TTY: 1-800-735-2942)
- **Iowa Department of Elder Affairs**—  
[www.state.ia.us/elderaffairs/](http://www.state.ia.us/elderaffairs/)  
515-725-3383
- **Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals**—  
[www.dia.iowa.gov/food](http://www.dia.iowa.gov/food)
- **Iowa Food Safety Task Force**—  
[www.profoodsafety.org](http://www.profoodsafety.org)
- **Iowa Life Long Links**—  
[www.lifelonglinks.org](http://www.lifelonglinks.org)

- **Iowa State University Extension Distribution Center**—  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)  
(Click “Food, Nutrition and Health” in topic list on left; then on “Food and Nutrition—Food Safety”)
- **Iowa State University Food Safety Project**—  
[www.iowafoodsafety.org](http://www.iowafoodsafety.org)
- **Partnership for Food Safety Education**—  
[www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)
- **Your local Iowa State University Extension office**—  
(To find the nearest office, go to [www.extension.iastate.edu/ouroffices.htm](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ouroffices.htm))

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**... and justice for all**

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# Looking at Assisted Living Facilities?

## Think about Food Safety



Food is an important service offered by Assisted Living Facilities (ALF). State regulations classify ALFs as foodservice establishments. They should be inspected at least once a year, the same as other commercial food operations. Inspection reports should be posted at the facility; they also are available online at <http://dia.iowa.gov/food> (Click on “Find an Inspection Report” and select “License Type of Foodservice Establishment.”)

When touring a prospective facility, ask to see the food preparation area, dining room, and dishroom. Your unscheduled visit will allow you to observe general cleanliness. Asking the following questions about foodservice practices will help you learn more about the facilities you visit.

### **Procedure/personnel questions**

1. When was the last inspection? What did the inspector report?
2. If critical violations were noted, how have they been corrected?
3. Is the foodservice manager certified in food safety?
4. How many staff members are typically on duty each meal period?
5. How long have most foodservice staff members been employed at this ALF?
6. How many full-time staff members work only in foodservice?
7. Do foodservice staff members also assist older adults with personal care, such as escorting to the toilet?

8. Are background checks run before hiring new staff members?

9. Do written policies specify when food-service staff members should not work due to health or illnesses?

### **Food preparation questions**

1. Is access to the food production area limited to foodservice staff or escorted visitors?
2. Do all visitors in the kitchen wear hair restraints?
3. Is the back door kept closed?
4. Are counters free from clutter of food packages and personal belongings?
5. Are refrigerated or frozen foods left at room temperature?
6. Is a hand sink available and stocked with soap and disposable towels?
7. Are foodservice staff members washing their hands properly (10 to 15 seconds with soap and warm water) after handling raw food, taking out garbage, before putting on clean gloves, and after returning from break?
8. Are gloves worn to handle food that is ready to eat?
9. Are all staff members in the kitchen wearing clean uniforms and aprons and have their hair restrained?

### **Dining room questions**

1. Are tables free of crumbs and other food debris?
2. Are chairs and floor free of food debris?
3. Are tables cleaned using a bucket of detergent water and clean wiping cloths?
4. Is a sanitizing spray or solution used after surfaces are cleaned?
5. Are tables and chairs in good repair?
6. Do servers wear clean uniforms and hair restraints?
7. Did servers wash their hands before setting tables or touching plates of food?
8. Do servers avoid touching the rim of glassware or eating end of silverware?
9. Are cold foods and beverages served just prior to meal service?
10. Are hot foods kept hot (above 135°F)?

### **Dishroom cleaning questions**

1. Is there a dishwashing machine in the kitchen area?
2. How do staff members ensure water is hot enough or the correct chemical concentration is used?
3. Does one staff member load the machine with soiled dishware and another staff member unload clean items?
4. Is there a handwashing sink with soap and disposable towels in the dishroom area?