Do you have a plan in place if an employee is sick?

When we think about Food Safety, the first word that comes to mind is **Prevention**. Along with prevention is a plan to make it happen. We are all quite aware of the headlines and the frightening Coronavirus outbreak. None of us want to think about this affecting our business, our employees, or our customers.

When we think about any illness that may affect our employees we need to have a system in place for making you aware of the issue. Do you have an **Illness and Injury (Hygiene) Policy** for your employees? Have they been trained? I have told my staff that I can solve any problem if I am aware of it. You will want to encourage your employees to report any illnesses and then as the owner, you can make the decision as to what you will do.

Here is an example of what I am referring to:

Illness and Injury Policy

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of the Illness and Injury Notification Policy is to provide guidance for employees and staff of the _____ as to the appropriate steps to take to preclude transmissions of foodborne illness or communicable diseases and report physical cuts and sores by informing an appropriate manager or other "person-in-charge" (PIC). All steps will be taken to ensure the safety of our products by removing affected employees/staff from any production-related area.

2.0 Employee/Staff Responsibility

All employees shall follow the reporting requirements involving symptoms, diagnosis, and high-risk conditions. All employees *subject to the required work restrictions or exclusions* that are imposed upon them as specified herein and shall comply with these requirements as well as follow good hygienic practices at all times.

3.0 Policy

All employees and staff shall report if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms to their PIC.

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Jaundice

- Sore throat with fever
- Lesions/Cuts
- Shingles

Employees/staff should also notify their PIC whenever diagnosed by a healthcare provider as being ill with any of the following diseases that can be transmitted through food or person-to-person by casual contact such as:

- Strep infection
- Staph infection
- Norwalk virus
- Salmonellosis
- Listeriosis

- Norovirus
- Escherichia coli
- Hepatitis A
- Coronavirus

Employees are to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and are to conform to good hygienic practices when working in foodservice establishments. Employees are to wash their hands and exposed area of arms thoroughly with soap and warm water before starting work, and as often as may be necessary to remove soil and contamination.

4.0 Other Risk Conditions

Care must be taken when:

- Exposure to or suspicion of causing any confirmed outbreak involving the above illnesses
- A member of their household is diagnosed with any of the above illnesses
- A member of their household is attending or working in a setting that is experiencing a confirmed outbreak of the above illnesses

5.0 PIC Responsibility

No person is to work in a food service establishment:

- in a capacity which can result in contamination of food or food-contact surfaces with disease-causing organisms
- while infected with a disease in a communicable form capable of transmission by food
- who is otherwise a carrier of organisms that cause such disease
- while afflicted with a boil or infected wound
- Employees are to wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet, smoking, sneezing, coughing, eating, drinking or otherwise soiling their hands before returning to work. Employees are to keep their fingernails clean and neatly trimmed.
- The PIC will continue to promote and reinforce awareness of this policy to all food employees on a regular basis to ensure it is being followed.
- Training will be performed by the _____ initially for new employees and annually thereafter

Implementing a guidance document and training your employees are the first steps you can take to help prevent any contamination of your business, employees and customers. And to quote my mom when I was growing up, "Did you wash your hands?".