

Foreign Bodies in Food

Discovering a foreign body in food is a very unpleasant experience however, not all pose a serious health risk. We have listed below some common food complaints with a short explanation and suggestions for the most suitable course of action should you find: -

<u>Item discovered</u>	<u>Action</u>
<p><i>Insects</i>- Occasionally small grubs may be discovered in canned vegetables. These are commonly found in sweet corn and tomatoes. The grubs are in fact the larvae of a moth. They live inside the kernel/tomato and are therefore impossible to see before processing. They are killed and sterilised by the canning process. As the use of pesticides decreases the incidence of these pests will increase</p>	<p><i>Action: No public health risk— contact the manufacturer</i></p>
<p><i>Wasps and fruit flies</i>-These are common in cans of fruit. They are naturally associated with ripe fruit and do not carry disease.</p>	<p><i>Action: No public health risk— contact the manufacturer</i></p>
<p><i>Struvite</i>- Certain naturally occurring elements in fish may develop into hard crystals during the canning process. These crystals may be mistaken for glass fragments and are called struvite. It is not harmful and is broken down by stomach acids if swallowed and is especially common in canned salmon. Struvite crystals will dissolve if placed in vinegar and gently heated.... glass won't.</p>	<p><i>Action: heat in vinegar, contact manufacturer if struvite—contact environmental health if glass</i></p>
<p><i>Mould in Dented cans</i>- damaged or incorrectly processed cans may allow mould growth to occur. This could indicate an error in production or storage.</p>	<p><i>Action: Contact Environmental Health as possible public health risk.</i></p>
<p><u>Fish</u> White fish such as cod or haddock may be infested with a small, round brownish yellow worm. These are found in the flesh. They are killed by cooking and are harmless to humans. The affected parts of the fish are usually cut away, but some may be overlooked.</p>	<p><i>Action: No public health risk contact retailer/manufacturer</i></p>
<p><u>Meat and poultry</u> Products made from meat and or poultry may contain small bones, skin or parts of blood vessels. These are unsightly but rarely a health hazard as they are normal parts of the original animal. Any personal inconvenience, e.g. chipped tooth, is best dealt with by the individual via the civil courts if necessary.</p>	<p><i>Action: No public health risk contact retailer/manufacturer</i> Note: it is very rare for prohibited parts of an animal (e.g. eyes eyelids etc) or non-food species (e.g. cats, dogs etc) to be used for human food. Meat such as lamb or chicken is readily available and so inexpensive that it makes the use of prohibited parts/species uneconomic.</p>
<p><u>Fruit and vegetables, stones, soil, and slugs</u> Fruit and vegetables commonly have soil, stones or small insects adhering to them. This is quite normal as they originate in the soil.</p>	<p><i>Action: Always wash fruit and veg thoroughly. No public health risk</i></p>

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<p><u>Greenfly on Salad vegetables</u> especially lettuce, may have greenfly attached. This is becoming increasingly common as the use of pesticides decreases.</p>	<p><i><u>Action: Do nothing other than wash products before consumption</u></i></p>
<p><u>Mould on vegetables and plant products</u> Mould growth will naturally occur when fruit and vegetables become bruised and damaged. This will be minimised if the buyer checks the produce before purchase and handles carefully afterwards</p>	<p><i><u>Action: No public health risk</u></i></p>
<p><u>Bakery Char</u> Bread and cakes may contain bits of overcooked dough which has flaked off bakery tins. It is not necessarily an indicator of poor hygiene, although they may be mistaken for rodent droppings which are black, and torpedo shaped. Bakery char is greyish and is unevenly shaped.</p>	<p><i><u>Action: Contact retailer No public health risk</u></i></p>
<p><u>Carbonised Grease</u> The machinery used to produce bread and cakes is lubricated with a non-toxic vegetable oil. Occasionally some may become incorporated into the dough giving areas of the product a grey/greasy appearance.</p>	<p><i><u>Action: Contact retailer No public health risk</u></i></p>
<p><u>Insects</u> Dried products such as flour, sugar and pulses may contain small insects such as psocids (book lice). These do not carry disease, but they eat through the paper of the packet. They breed very quickly in warm, dark, humid conditions and so spread into uncontaminated food very quickly.</p>	<p><i><u>Action: Throw out all affected food and clean out cupboards. Store new dried goods in airtight containers and ensure good ventilation in kitchen. No public health risks</u></i></p>
<p><u>Crystals</u> Large sugar crystals may form in confectionery and may be mistaken for glass. The crystals will dissolve in warm water.</p>	<p><i><u>Action: No public health risk contact manufacturer</u></i></p>
<p><u>Chocolate Bloom</u> Chocolate may develop a light-coloured bloom if stored at too high a temperature. It is not mould but is due to fat separation. It is not harmful.</p>	<p><i><u>Action: return to retailer No public health risk</u></i></p>