

Food Advice

Common food complaints

TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH



BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN



Food is surprisingly complex – it is grown or reared in an agricultural environment (which could be anywhere in the world), manufacturing can be in highly complex factories (again, these can be anywhere in the world), and the food then goes through a complicated transport and retail system before reaching the final consumer.

It's no wonder that things sometimes go wrong with the food we buy!

Some problems are regarded as part of the natural process of that food, and whilst manufacturers are expected to take precautions, it is accepted that consumers may sometimes find these problems with the food that they buy.

Here are some common problems that you might find....



Tinned and Bottled Foods

Insects – occasionally, small grubs may be discovered in canned vegetables especially sweet corn and tomatoes. The grubs are larvae of a moth which lives inside the sweet corn kernel or tomato and are impossible to see before they are processed. Although it isn't pleasant to find a grub in your food, they are killed and sterilised by the canning process. As the use of pesticides decreases, these types of problems may increase – so it is worth carefully checking canned fruit and vegetables etc before using them.

Wasps & Fruit Flies – these are naturally associated with fruit and so often found in tins of fruit & fruit products e.g., jam, purees, fruit yoghurts etc. Again, they will have been heat treated and are therefore not a risk to public health.

Struvite – this looks like glass, but is a naturally occurring element in fish that may develop hard crystals during the canning process. These crystals are not harmful and will be broken down by stomach acid if swallowed. Struvite is especially common in tinned salmon and will dissolve if placed in vinegar and gently heated for 15-20 minutes. However if it is glass this will not dissolve. If you believe it to be glass, there

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may be a risk to public health and further examination will be needed by the Food, Health and Safety Enforcement Team.

Curd found in Tinned Salmon – White material resembling coagulated egg white is occasionally found on the surface of flesh or embedded in the cavities between pieces of fish. The “curd” is a protein like material which is present in raw salmon flesh and may separate out after cooking, and presents no public health risk.

Mould – dented, damaged or incorrectly processed tins or jars may allow mould growth to occur. Damaging to the packaging seal in particular may allow air to enter the product & mould to grow. This could indicate an error in production or storage. We would advise you to contact the Food, Health and Safety Enforcement Team due to the potential public Health Risk



Meat, Fish and Poultry

Skin, small bone fragments etc. - 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. They may sometimes cause problems such as chipped tooth but are not generally regarded as a public health issue.

Large bone fragments - These may pose a health hazard from choking etc. Please contact the Food, Health and Safety Team as there is a potential Public Health Risk.



Codworm – white fish such as cod or haddock may be infested with a small, round brownish/yellow worm 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 missed. You are advised to contact the retailer or supplier as there is no Public Health Risk



Fruit and Vegetables

Stones, soil & slugs - unwashed fruit & vegetables commonly have soil, stones or small slugs stuck to them. This is quite normal as they originate from soil. Wash all fruit & vegetables thoroughly before eating – this helps to get rid of pesticides etc as well

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Greenfly – Salad vegetables, especially lettuce may have greenfly attached. This is becoming more common as the use of pesticides decreases, but they are not harmful. Wash all salad items thoroughly, particularly as this helps to get rid of other potential contamination as well.

Mould Growth –this occurs when fruit & vegetables become bruised or damaged. This will be minimised if the buyer checks the produce before purchase and handles it carefully afterwards. Try returning it to the retailer



Pre-washed/ Packaged Ready to Eat Fruit / Veg

Foreign Bodies - These products are processed and should not contain soil or extraneous matter. Contact Food, Health and Safety Team so that we can assess if there is a Health Risk



Bakery Goods

Bakery Char - Bread and cakes may contain bits of overcooked dough which has flaked off bakery tins. It does not necessarily indicate poor hygiene – but they may be mistaken for rodent droppings which are black and regular torpedo shaped, whilst bakery char is greyish and uneven in shape. There is no Public Health Risk

Carbonised Grease - The machinery used to produce bread and cakes is lubricated with a non-toxic vegetable oil. Occasionally, some of this may become incorporated into the dough giving the product a grey/ greasy appearance. Again, there is no Public Health Risk as the oil is food grade oil.



Dried Foods

Book Lice (psocids) – Dried products such as flour, sugar and pulses may contain small insects such as psocids (book lice). These do not carry disease, but they are unsightly and can eat through the paper of the packet. They breed very quickly in warm, humid conditions and so spread into uncontaminated food very quickly. We have a separate

leaflet on how to do with Psocids.

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Insects (weevils, beetles, moths, larvae etc) – Dried products can be infested with insects as a result of poor harvesting, inappropriate transport and storage conditions before and after sale. Whilst there is generally no public health risk an investigation may be appropriate to ensure food is being handled and stored correctly throughout the food chain. The Food, Health and Safety Enforcement team will investigate insect food complaints providing the problem is discovered when first opening the product packaging and the durability date hasn't expired. Please contact the Food, Health and Safety Enforcement Team for advice.



Chocolate and Confectionary

Bloom – chocolate may develop a light coloured bloom if stored at too high a temperature. It is not mould but is due to fat separation and is not harmful. There is no Public Health Risk

Sugar Crystals – large sugar crystals may form in confectionery and may be mistaken for glass. The crystals will dissolve in warm water. If you believe it to be glass, please contact the Food, Health and Safety Enforcement Team.



Dairy Products

Crystals in Cheese – Calcium Lactate crystals appear naturally in some cheeses, particularly hard, matured or vintage cheese. The salt crystals form naturally when lactic acid and calcium combine during the drying out and ripening process. There is no health risk associated with the crystals as they are part of the natural make up of the cheese. If you believe it to be glass, please contact the Food, Health and Safety Enforcement Team.

This leaflet is intended for guidance only. Reference should be made to the legislation for more detailed information.

This leaflet highlights some common food complaints together with a short explanation and suggestions for the best course of action. All our Officers are trained to investigate food complaints and assess the risks to health. If you need any advice please contact us. We'll be happy to help.

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