

**Anderson Cooper 360**  
**Tuesday, June 21, 2005**  
**7:00 – 8:00 p.m.**  
**Transcript**

HEIDI COLLINS, CNN CORRESPONDENT: It's cold, refreshing and oh- so-good on a hot summer day, but did you ever think about what's in your ice?

JENNIFER BERG, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY: Fecal matter in ice is a serious problem.

COLLINS: Jennifer Berg is the head of the graduate department at the Food Science and Nutrition program at New York University. She says ice can hold bacteria that makes you just as sick as anything else you eat.

BERG: Tainted ice is usually a result of having e.coli, fecal matter inside the ice.

COLLINS (on camera): How worried should people be about something like this?

BERG: You know, we don't want to make the American public completely neurotic and so scared of our food supply, when in reality we have a safer food supply than most countries, but we do need to be careful.

COLLINS (voice-over): Ice can become contaminated in many ways, like microorganisms in the water supply. But according to the experts CNN consulted, the most common causes of ice contamination are poor handling and storage.

Take Denton, Texas, 1999. Fifty-eight members of a high school drill team were infected with various levels of gastrointestinal illnesses at a camp. The ice got contaminated with e.coli after campers used their bare hands to scoop ice out of the machine. And recently, a British government study surveyed clubs, bars and pubs in London, and found half the ice they used was full of bugs and bacteria that can make people sick.

(on camera): So that got us thinking, what would we find if we bought ice just like you would on any given day at any given restaurant across the country?

(voice-over): We took our ice samples in Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta, New York and Los Angeles, at a combination of fast food chains and local establishments in each town, a total of 23 samples. In each location, we walked in and ordered our drinks with our ice on the side, and then carefully, without touching the ice, poured it into sterile bags, and then set the samples off to a certified food laboratory, Microbac Laboratories in Warrendale, Pennsylvania.

(on camera): Now, our study didn't follow all EPA protocol. That would mean we would have had to have gone to each restaurant four or five times, tested the city water, and then made sure that our sample ice touched nothing before it went into our sample bags. But

our results were tested against the most basic EPA standards, and what we found was disturbing.

(voice-over): In every city but one, there was a restaurant that failed those EPA standards.

This McDonalds in Atlanta failed. This Dunkin Donuts in Chicago failed. This 7-Eleven in Dallas failed, and so did this Burger King in Los Angeles.

On the day we tested, according to Microbac Laboratories, each ice sample from these four establishments was contaminated with fecal matter.

(on camera): That's disgusting.

BERG: It's so easy to spread. It's very easy to prevent, very easy to prevent. It's a matter of washing in very warm water, really washing not just the hands but up until, you know, through the forearm, with soap, very hot water, drying it off, training employees to all do that.

COLLINS (voice-over): And the one city that got a clean bill of ice? Well, that surprised even us.

(on camera): When you think of New York, you think horribly dirty city, but yet when we did our little ice samples, not a single place failed. Why?

BERG: New York City has much more stringent laws and regulations in place inspecting food. The other thing is, in a city like New York, and if you're talking about the fast food places that you've looked at, they have very high volume. By the end of the evening, that ice machine has emptied out. They've completely depleted their supply.

COLLINS (voice-over): We then contacted the establishments that failed our single tests. In every case, after hearing the results of our test, the owner/operator said they shut down their ice machines and cleaned them thoroughly, and also retrained their employees.

All four restaurants said they retested their ice after cleaning the machines and found no trace of bacteria.

7-Eleven sent us this: "The safety of 7-11 customers is of the utmost importance to us." And from Dunkin Donuts: "Dunkin Donuts strives to endure adherence to food safety standards." McDonald's issued this statement from the franchise owner: "My restaurant has an excellent track record with our local health department. My last inspection score was 99 out of 100." Burger King responded by telling us: "The particular restaurant has consistently achieved high health and safety results from both our internal and external audits, as well as those of the local health department."

However, health departments in Atlanta and in Los Angeles told us they do not test water

in ice machines during health inspections.

To be fair, none of the other locations of these establishments failed our tests in other cities, and we only tested the failed establishments once. But clearly, there is contaminated ice out there. So, will it make you sick?

BERG: You personally, Heidi, probably not, but chances are people did. Young children, older people, anybody who was sick to begin with.

COLLINS: Most common complaints: Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

So what can you do to protect yourself? If you are lucky enough to live in one of the handful of states that have food safety officers, look for the sign telling you that one is on duty. Otherwise, if you see the server filling your cup, make sure they are wearing gloves, and they don't touch the ice.

Or you could do what Jennifer Berg does.

(on camera): Do you get ice in any of your drinks when you're out to eat?

BERG: I just decided it's OK to just have beverages room temperature.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

COLLINS: So whether you drink your drink with or without ice, you should know dirty hands in the ice bin is only half the problem. The other culprit for the contaminated ice is the ice machine itself. These dispensers need to be cleaned on a daily basis to prevent that buildup of water and bacteria in the very bottom of the bin and in the water lines.

COOPER: So are there any actual numbers on how many people get sick from ice?

COLLINS: Not really. There are not exact numbers. In fact, the CDC has been tracking the outbreaks of illnesses since about 1968 caused by contaminated ice, but they don't have precise figures, because people usually think they're getting sick from the food they eat, and hardly anybody really thinks of ice as a food.

COOPER: All right. Heidi Collins, thanks.