

There is increasing consumer demand for diverse cuisine. Sushi and sashimi are commonly available in many food establishments across the province. Sashimi typically consists of raw fish/ seafood only. Sushi is the generic term used to reference fish/ seafood (cooked or raw) or vegetables rolled around or placed on acidified rice and nori (seaweed).

What are the risks?

Even though sushi may not always contain raw or partially raw fish or seafood, it is considered potentially hazardous, since it has characteristics which *could* support microbial growth causing foodborne illness. These foods can provide a growth medium for microbes due to the presence of rice, cut vegetables, tofu, and/ or cooked fish and seafood.

Eating raw fish and seafood can increase the risk of human disease from microbes that are typically destroyed by cooking. Parasitic risks can be prevented through freezing fish to a temperature of -20C (-4F) or colder for a period of at least 7 days. Freezing cannot destroy viruses or bacteria.

There are fish which do not pose a significant risk to parasitic infection. Some species of fish used in sushi and sashimi which do not require freezing include:

- Albacore tuna
- Eel
- Bluefin tuna
- Mahi mahi
- Yellowfin tuna (ahi)

For a complete list of species not requiring a freezing treatment, as well as detailed requirements for food establishment operators, refer to the *NS Department of Agriculture Sushi/ Sashimi Guidelines* (2011) at www.novascotia.ca/agri



Other Food Safety Considerations

There is a culinary preference to eat sushi with rice that has not been chilled. Sushi rice is usually acidified by vinegar after cooking. For a short period of time, this acidification provides some protection against microbial growth which can cause illness. The practice does not allow sushi to be stored at room temperature for extended periods of time. If choosing to make sushi at home, consider the following food safety practices:

- Thoroughly mix sushi rice to ensure all areas of rice are evenly acidified.
- Consider promptly refrigerating sushi that is not immediately consumed after preparation.
- Do not exceed a maximum 60-minute hold or display time for sushi at room temperature; discard any leftovers that were part of the display.
- Discard sushi rice that is kept at room temperature and not used and consumed within a three-hour timeframe.
- Ensure guests are aware of the increased health risks associated with raw fish or seafood consumption. This would especially apply to guests who are very young, elderly, pregnant, or immunocompromised.