



**Government Health Department
New South Wales Australia
Information Sheet – Safety of Ice Machines in Health Care Facilities
Published January 2006**

In January 2006 the Government Health Department of the State of New South Wales in Australia published and circulated an information sheet, titled “Safety of Ice Machines in Health Care Facilities”. The information sheet was based on the NSW Infection Control Policy. The following is a summary of the contents of that information sheet.

Summary:

Ice machines and ice are frequently used in health care facilities. They can be found in such areas as food services, emergency departments, physiotherapy, maternity units and operating theatres. Ice machines and storage units may become contaminated from a number of sources:

- Hands of staff
- Improper storage of ice
- Poor cleaning of equipment
- Ice handling equipment/implements

Ice from contaminated ice machines may result in adverse events for patients. These include:

- Colonisation of microorganisms
- Blood stream infections
- Respiratory infections including legionnaires disease
- Gastrointestinal illness
- Surgical site and skin infections

If used for cold storage, it may be implicated in:

- Contamination of clinical specimens
- Contamination of medical solutions

Ice machines in health care establishments have been implicated in outbreaks of infection and as potential reservoirs of infectious agents.

Ice, if consumed is considered a food, so health care establishments must comply with the Food Act 2003 and the Food Standards Code.

For severely immunocompromised patients ice made from potable water may not be suitable and ice may need to be made from sterile water. To avoid contamination, ice intended for human consumption should be separate from ice intended for first aid and storage of medical solutions, pharmaceuticals and clinical specimen transportation.

Microbiological testing of ice, bins, machinery and dispensers is generally only indicated during outbreak investigations. The information sheet provides further advice regarding things to remember when handling ice as well as cleaning and maintenance of ice machines and storage bins.

Original Document can be viewed at

http://www.sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au/albionstcentre/documents/pdfdocs/Ice_Machines.pdf

