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#### Food Hygiene Practices in Food Restaurants

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**Background:** Food safety is a system that encompasses the handling, preparation, and storage of food in ways that prevent the transmission of contaminants. This is achieved through a series of routine procedures aimed at averting health risks and to avoid food spoilage. Food spoilage can lead to food poisoning, which is a common condition resulting from the consumption of contaminated food. Shawarma (cooked meat) also called shawarma, shawerma, and Kebab is one of the common fast-food meals consumed by most people. However, this meal may cause a health risk to the consumer due to its potential to contain harmful microorganisms, this is often a result of inadequate cooking processes and general hygiene practices.

**Objectives:** This study aims to determine the overall microbial quality of restaurant-prepared Shawarma in Hebron city.

**Methods:** Four random fast-food restaurants in Hebron city were selected. And from these restaurants 20 random Shawarma sandwiches were purchased and each sample assigned with special code (A, B, C.etc) and then the samples transported to the Microbiology laboratory at Hebron University under proper storage conditions. Necessary examinations were conducted in the laboratory, including Total Plate Count, Total Coliform, Fecal Coliform, Yeast and Mold, Staphylococcus aureus.



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**Results:** The results were compared to international and local standards. Total Plate count results range from  $<1 \times 10^2$  CFU/g to  $1 \times 10^6$  CFU/g, Yeast and mold result range from  $<1 \times 10^2$  CFU/g to  $19 \times 10^2$  CFU/g, all results of Total Coliform test were  $<1 \times 10^2$  CFU/g, Fecal Coliform results range from  $<1 \times 10^2$  CFU/g to  $55 \times 10^1$  CFU/g, and for Staphylococcus aureus result range from  $<1 \times 10^2$  CFU/g to  $18 \times 10^2$  CFU/g. The results showed that the percentage of samples not in compliance with local and international specifications for tests Total Plate Count, Yeast and Mold, Total Coliform, Fecal Coliform, and Staphylococcus aureus were 25%, 25%, 0%, 100%, and 75% respectively.

**Conclusions:** Microbiological quality of Shawarma sandwiches depends on the quality of raw meat and other ingredients, efficiency of cooking process, proper sanitary practices for personnel and for cooking utensils. Obviously, for the safety of shawarma sandwiches, it is necessary to cut a not more than 2-cm piece of filet every time to be sure that these pieces are efficiently cooked and the latter is ready-made.

**Keywords:** Shawarma, Food safety, Total Plate Count, Total Coliform, Fecal Coliform, Staphylococcus aureus, Yeast and Mold.