

Food Safety Reminders for the Food Worker

Hand washing is one of the most important practices everyone can follow to reduce the transfer of germs whether person to person, person to food, or person to food contact surfaces. This in turn lessens illnesses. Food Workers not only protect the Public they serve by proper hand washing but also protect themselves from what the Public may bring in to their facility.

A sign or poster that notifies food employees to wash their hands shall be provided at all hand washing lavatories used by food employees and shall be clearly visible to food employees. Use hand washing sinks only. Do not wash hands in food prep sink, utensil washing sink, service sink, or mop sink. A sink used for food preparation or utensil washing, or a service or mop sink, may not be provided with hand cleanser and hand drying supplies. Remember, the signage includes public restrooms if your employees use them. It is also a good idea to reminder your patrons to wash their hands as well.

When am I required to wash my hands?

- before starting work or changing tasks;
- when soiled or contaminated After touching bare human body parts (except clean hands & arms);
- after handling soiled equipment or utensils;
- before putting on single service gloves;
- after caring for or handling service animals or aquatic animals:
- when switching between raw & ready-to-eat food:
- after touching raw, fresh or frozen beef, poultry, fish or meat;
- after mopping, sweeping, removing garbage or using the telephone;
- after using the bathroom;
- after smoking, eating, sneezing or drinking;
- after touching anything that might result in contamination of hands.

What is good hand washing?

All employees involved with food preparation must wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms with soap and water. Lather hands and exposed portions of arms. Vigorously rub together for at least 20 seconds, paying particular attention to areas underneath fingernails and between fingers. Rinse with clean water. Dry thoroughly with single service paper towel or hand drying device. No special soaps are needed.

What is the main reason for washing hands and not touching ready-to-eat food with bare hands?

The main reason for not touching ready-to-eat foods with bare hands is to prevent viruses and bacteria, which are present in your body from contaminating the food. Viruses and bacteria are invisible to the naked eye, but may be present on your hands if you do not wash them thoroughly, particularly after using the bathroom. The law prohibits bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods and requires good hand washing by food service workers.

Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food items consist of:

- Anything previously cooked whether it is served hot or cold.
- Assembly of salads and sandwiches.
- Breads, buns, candy, cookies, pastries, rolls, or other forms of baked goods.
- Deli items such as cheeses, lunch meats, ham salad, pasta salad, etc.
- Food and drink garnishes such as celery, lemons, limes, olives, parsley, pickles, watercress.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables whether on a deli platter, salad bar, or presented uncooked to the consumer.
- Ice served to the customer;
- Any food that will not be thoroughly cooked or reheated after it is prepared.

How can I prepare or serve ready-to-eat food avoiding contact with my bare hands?

Use any of the following to prepare or serve foods without bare hand contact:

- tongs;
- forks & spoons;
- deli paper;
- disposable gloves;
- waxed paper;
- napkins;
- spatulas.

What can I do with a ready-to-eat food item if it was touched with bare hands?

You can either heat the food thoroughly to the temperature required for cooking or reheating, or discard the food, if it was touched with bare hands.

Am I required to wear disposable sanitary gloves?

State law does not require gloves to be worn, but does require that ready-to-eat food be prepared and served without bare hand contact. Wearing disposable sanitary gloves is one of several acceptable ways to comply with this law. Hand washing is still required and necessary to prevent food contamination.

Proper Glove Usage: Gloves are actually an extension of one's hands and need to be treated as such. Plastic or Latex gloves are considered SINGLE-USE and task specific. They must be discarded and hands properly washed:

- When you switch between different forms of raw animal FOOD such as beef, lamb, pork, POULTRY, and FISH.
- When you switch between different forms of READY-TO-EAT FOOD.
- When you switch between READY-TO-EAT FOOD and raw animal FOOD.
- When damaged or soiled.
- When interruptions occur in the operation such as dispensing drinks or handling money.

Must I change my gloves after touching money with gloves on?

No. Food outbreak investigations have not identified the handling of money as a cause of illness. But it is a good idea to change your gloves and wash your hands between touching money and preparing food. Many patrons complain to the local health department if they see food workers using the same gloves to prepare food and handle money.

Is a short order cook required to wear gloves?

The short order cook may not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. Disposable gloves are one possible way to prevent bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Another way is to use forks, tongs or spatulas.

When do I have to replace or change gloves?

Always change gloves if the gloves get ripped, torn, or contaminated. Contamination can occur after using the bathroom, smoking, coughing, sneezing, and in between preparing raw and cooked foods. Food worker hands must be washed thoroughly and be cleaned before wearing new gloves.

Other items: Keep fingernails trimmed, filed, and maintained so edges and surfaces are cleanable and not rough. No fingernail polish or artificial fingernails when working with exposed food, unless wearing intact gloves in good repair. No jewelry on hands or arms except plain ring such as wedding band.