

LRB - Health & Safety Solutions

Some Simple Advice for Food Handlers

The importance of Personal Hygiene

High-risk foods require maximum hygiene precautions when handled because they are particularly liable to the growth of food poisoning bacteria. High-risk foods are products and/or ingredients that are ready-to-eat, e.g. eaten without applied treatment such as cooking immediately before eating that would destroy food poisoning bacteria. If you're engaged in handling high risk foods, remember by law you must observe the following essentials of personal hygiene:

- Appropriate protective clothing should be worn including hair protection. Hair should be well protected against any possible fall finding its way into the food;
- You must not cough, sneeze, pick your nose or wipe it on sleeve, spit, test food with fingers, or otherwise touch your mouth, skin, hair etc while handling/serving food.
- Finger nails should be kept short and clean regardless use of gloves when serving food; false nails should not be worn when handling food as these might fall into food;
- Jewellery should be kept to the minimum, particularly rings, watches etc as these harbour harmful bacteria; there is also the risk that these might fall into food;
- Cuts, open wounds, sores etc should always be covered with catering blue waterproof plaster;
- Do not smoke, eat or drink in food preparation/service areas, including behind counters, bars, etc.

The need for Hand Washing

Effective hand washing is one of the most important, indeed a crucial factor in preventing food poisoning. For hand washing to be effective, you must observe the following:

- you must use a wash hand basin exclusively for this purpose;
- you must use comfortable hot water and soap;
- Rinse hands properly before drying them;
- Dry your hands properly by using an hygienic means i.e. disposable paper towels, clean roller towels;

Never dry your hands on a tea towel, service cloth or protective clothing as this poses a potential for cross-contamination. Hands should be washed as frequently as necessary throughout the day, but **always**

BEFORE:

- starting work
- touching raw meat and high risk foods;

BETWEEN:

- handling raw and cooked meats/foods;

AFTER:

- handling raw meat/food;
- handling raw eggs in their shell;
- visiting the toilet;
- coughing or sneezing into your hands;
- touching your hair or face, nose, skin, etc;
- carrying out cleaning jobs or touching containers of cleaning chemicals;
- dealing with rubbish/waste and bins;
- eating, drinking and smoking (in areas set aside for these activities)

If your hands aren't clean they can spread food poisoning bacteria. A quick rinse won't make sure they're really clean. So it's important that all staff know how to wash their hands properly.

Washing your hands properly – Six simple steps

1. Wet your hands thoroughly under warm running water and squirt liquid soap onto the palm of one hand
2. Rub your hands together to make a good lather
3. Rub the palm of one hand along the back of the other and along the fingers. Then repeat with the other hand
4. Rub in between each of your fingers on both hands and round your thumbs
5. Rinse off the soap with clean water
6. Dry hands thoroughly on a disposable towel

This should take 10 to 20 seconds. Remember that everyone who handles food always need to wash their hands before starting work, after a break, after going to the toilet, after emptying a bin and before starting a new task.

Should you wear gloves?

You don't need to use gloves for good hygiene. In fact, using gloves can actually cause problems, unless you're careful how you use them. Remember, you need to wash your hands properly, whether you use gloves or not. If you use gloves, make sure you do the following things:

- Wash and dry hands thoroughly before putting on gloves
- Change gloves frequently
- Change gloves after handling raw foods and before handling cooked/ready-to-eat foods
- Throw away gloves that are torn, dirty or contaminated (don't leave them on work surfaces)
- Throw away gloves when they are taken off for any reason
- If you stop preparing food to do something else (such as taking money from a customer) take off your gloves and put on a fresh pair before starting to handle food again
- Never re-use gloves