



Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Practices

Did you know? According to the CDC, poor personal hygiene is considered the leading cause of foodborne illnesses.

What are personal hygiene practices?

Personal hygiene practices are the overall behaviors, activities, and actions that can help food employees from spreading viruses and bacteria to food. They can be summed up into four categories:

1. Hand practices: employees shall follow proper handwashing procedures; avoid wearing fingernail polish or false fingernails; use single-use gloves properly; and avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.
2. Personal cleanliness: food employees shall maintain an overall state of cleanliness, including showering or bathing before work.
3. Work Attire: employees shall wear effective hair restraints, clean clothing and clean aprons, and remove rings, bracelets, and watches before preparing food, washing dishware, etc.
4. Employee illness policies: food employees are required to inform their manager or person-in-charge if they are experiencing vomiting and/ or diarrheal symptoms and are to be excluded from the operation until symptom free for 48 hours or receive written release from a doctor.

When should employees wash their hands?

Employees shall wash their hands immediately after engaging in activities that contaminate the hands and...

- When entering a food preparation area, or leaving and returning to a food prep area;
- Before putting on clean, single-use gloves for working with food and between glove changes if a change in task has occurred;
- Before handling clean equipment and serving utensils, or after handling soiled dishes, equipment, or utensils;
- When switching between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods;
- After touching the face, hair, or body, soiled clothing or aprons, or after coughing or sneezing;
- After using the restroom, eating, drinking, smoking, using your cell phone, handling money, taking out the garbage, sweeping/ mopping floors, using chemicals, after cleaning/ sanitizing, or any other activity that might contaminate the hands.

Why are good personal hygiene practices important?

Good hygienic practices can make the difference between serving food safe for consumption and food that can make someone ill. Nearly 70% of food-borne illness can be traced back to poor personal hygiene, whether as a result of an employee illness or handling foods with bare hands. Accordingly, proper hand washing is a critical step in the food preparation process to help prevent the spread of food-borne illnesses, such as the norovirus.

What are the proper handwashing steps?

1. Turn on the water and wet hands and arms using running water as hot as is comfortable (at least 85°F).
2. Apply enough soap to build up a good lather.
3. Scrub hands and forearms for at least 20 seconds, paying particular attention to the areas between fingers and underneath fingernails.
4. Rinse hands and arms thoroughly under warm, running water.
5. Dry hands and arms using single-use towels and use the disposable towel to turn off the hand sink faucet.



Top 5 Most Common Personal Hygiene Violations:

1. *Smart Watch Shenanigans* — Remove jewelry from hands and arms before preparing food or working around food prep areas because these items can harbor bacteria, fall off, contaminate food, and prevent proper handwashing. Per the 2022 FDA Food Code, a plain wedding band is the only acceptable form of jewelry.
2. *Hand “un-washing”* — After washing hands, ensure the faucet is turned off with a paper towel, or other clean barrier, to prevent re-contaminating clean hands. Also consider using a paper towel to open the door when leaving the restroom.
3. *The ‘Ol Switcheroo* — Dishwashers that handle dirty dishes and utensils must properly wash hands before putting away clean and sanitized equipment to prevent cross-contamination.
4. *Employee Beverages* — To prevent contaminating food and food-contact surfaces, employees shall not eat in food preparation areas and are only permitted to drink from a cup with a lid and straw.
5. *Bare Hand Contact* — Food can become contaminated when handled with bare hands, particularly if hands have not been washed. Single use gloves, spatulas, tongs, or deli tissues must be used as a barrier when handling ready-to-eat foods.