



Food Handler Solutions LLC

School Food Handler Study Guide

First Edition - Chapter 5

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FOOD HANDLER

Chapter 5

Personal Hygiene

In the previous chapters we looked at a variety of hazards that can contaminate food. Now, let's take a look at another typical cause of contamination that is often the cause of foodborne illness . . . People.

Personal hygiene goes far beyond simply washing your hands correctly. It is a culture that will keep you, your coworkers and your customers healthy.

Personal cleanliness and awareness are important in preventing foodborne illness and the following proper and basic guidelines are key:

- Bathing and showering before work
- Ensuring you wear clean uniforms and that your hair is covered
- Following proper hand care guidelines
- Reporting any health issues
- Being aware of what you are doing with your hands, this is a tough one! It is often the “little” things that can result in illness.



Bathing before work . . . like the old commercial said. “Just do it!!”

Clean uniforms and clothing - A food handler's clothing plays an important part in preventing the potential spread of foodborne illness. Clean clothing and uniforms help to prevent the spread of bacterial infections. Dirty clothing can potentially carry pathogens that can cause foodborne illnesses. This includes your aprons and hair restraints too!!

Hair should always be properly restrained to help prevent any possible contamination of food. Hair nets, clean baseball caps and beard restraints

are required and must be worn in order to effectively keep hair from getting into food.

The following jewelry **MUST** be removed before beginning work.

- Rings (except for a plain band)
- Bracelets (this includes medical alert bracelets)
- Watches

A food service facility may also require food handlers to remove other types of jewelry such as:

- Earrings
- Necklaces
- Facial Jewelry

These items are difficult to keep clean and could potentially fall off the wearer and cause contamination of food.

Hand care – Hand care does not just pertain to hand washing. In a food service operation this is a practice done for both you and the customer. It involves 3 key areas - proper hand washing, attention to injuries and proper use of food service gloves.

Proper Hand Washing – Big questions regarding hand washing are:

1. Do you wash your hands often enough?
2. Do you know how to properly wash your hands?
3. Are the proper tools available?

How Often? - A food handler is required to keep their hands as clean and germ free as possible. The following are a few “Rules of Thumb” to follow during the day and they are non-negotiable requirements.

ALWAYS wash your hands if the following occur:

- Whenever hands or gloves become soiled.
- Between ALL distinct jobs or tasks.
- After using the restroom in the restroom and AGAIN in the kitchen before returning to work.
- Between all glove changes.
- Touching your body, face or hair
- Handling soiled clothes like a smock or apron
- Handling cleaning chemicals
- Handling money
- After eating or drinking
- Taking out the trash or handling a trash container
- Handling raw meats (before and after)
- Smoking

How do I do it right? – There are 6 steps to properly washing hands. They are simple and if followed will go a long way towards promoting food safety and good health.

1. Use running, potable water and adjust it that it is as hot as you can comfortably stand.
2. Apply soap to your hands and any exposed part of your arm up to the elbow. Be sure to use enough to get a good lather going.
3. Vigorously scrub hands and forearms for a minimum of 20 seconds.
Remember - Any exposed part of the hand or arm that may come in contact with food, must be properly washed.
4. Clean under fingernails and between fingers.
5. Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
6. Dry hands and arms with a single use paper towel or warm-air hand dryer.

BONUS - It is also recommended to use a paper towel to turn off the water and to grab the handle of the door when leaving the bathroom.

What tools do I need at the handwash sink? – A properly stocked hand wash area will have the following items:

1. Hot running water
2. Hand Soap
3. Single paper towels or a warm air hand dryer
4. Garbage container located at every handwashing area

Other items that are recommended are –

- Aprons should be taken off and hung before entering and using the restroom to avoid contamination.
- Signage with instructions on proper handwashing procedures
- A nail brush for cleaning fingernails (Note that a nail brush must be cleaned regularly to prevent the buildup of harmful bacteria)

Other things to consider regarding handwashing are:

- A hand washing sink cannot be used for any purpose other than the washing of hands.
- Some states and jurisdictions require a specific minimum water temperature. Example – Many jurisdictions require a minimum water temperature of 100° for handwashing.
- Hand washing should never take place in a three compartment dish sink or anywhere other than a designated handwashing sink.
- Every establishment should have posted signs on how to properly wash hands and where needed multi-lingual.

Attention to Injuries – Cuts to hands and fingers are common and happen at home and at work. If a food handler has an open wound or scab on their hands or sees one on a coworker the following must be done before working in the food service area.

1. Cuts or wounds and the area around it must be cleaned using the proper handwashing procedures.
2. A bandage must be applied to prevent any contamination.

3. Gloves or a finger cot must be worn at all times until the wound is healed.

When do I change my gloves? - If not used properly gloves can cause contamination just like bare hands. The following are guidelines for changing gloves during the work day.

- They become soiled or torn
- Before beginning a new task
- At least every four hours during continual use
- After handling raw meats and before handling cooked and ready to eat foods

Remember – The gloves are not there to protect you from the food they are there to protect the food from you.

Hand Sanitizers - Hand sanitizers should be used only after washing hands. Sanitizers are not a replacement for handwashing and should *never* take the place of handwashing in any circumstance. Also, all hand sanitizer solutions should be approved by the FDA for use in a food service operation.

Illness – No one wants to make anyone sick and yet many will come to work with an illness. This is exactly the type of behavior that can make a lot of people sick quickly and in a food service operation one sick food handler can make hundreds of customers sick in just one serving period.

Be responsible about your own health and also be aware of the health of your coworkers. The following are signs of serious illness and must be reported immediately if any of these are experienced or witnessed during the work day.

Vomiting
Jaundice
Fever

Diarrhea
Sore throat
Infected Cuts/Lesions/Skin Boils



Lastly, we all have bad habits and in a food service operation we must be aware of these things that can cause a foodborne illness and make our customers sick. Examples are:

- Improper taste testing – NEVER use the same utensil for tasting more than once. Disposable cutlery and cups are ideal for tasting – One use and it is in the trash.
- Food handlers should not eat, drink or chew gum while prepping or serving food.
- Be sure to wash hands after smoking. Cigarettes can transfer saliva to the hands and then to food. Wash up after you light up.