

Health & Hygiene of Food Handlers

Under the legislation, as a food handler you need to do whatever you can to make sure you do not make food unsafe or unsuitable.

Food handlers should:

- Wash and dry their hands thoroughly and regularly
- Stop hair, clothes, jewellery or phone touching food or surfaces (e.g. tie hair back, remove loose jewellery, cover open sores)
- Don't touch ready-to-eat food with bare hands – use tongs or gloves
- Wear clean clothing and aprons
- Do not eat, spit, smoke, sneeze, blow or cough over food or surfaces that touch food

You need to tell your supervisor if you think you have contaminated food in any way.

What to do if a Food Handler is Sick?

Some illnesses can be passed through food (i.e. gastro and Hepatitis A). Food handlers need to report any illness to their supervisor. Food businesses should exclude food handlers that are experiencing a food-borne illness or a symptom of food-borne illness from food handling duties for 48 hours after symptoms cease (i.e. vomiting, diarrhoea or fever).

Washing Hands Properly

To effectively wash hands, food handler should follow the following steps:

- Use the hand wash basin provided just for washing hands
- Wet your hands under warm running water
- Lather them with soap and thoroughly scrub fingers, palms, wrists, backs of hands and under nails for about 15 seconds. Use nail brush if needed to get under the fingernails.
- Rinse hands under warm running water
- Turn off taps using a paper towel or elbow
- Thoroughly dry hands with a single-use towel.

When to Wash Hands

Food handlers should wash their hands under the following circumstances:

- Before they start handling food
- Before working with ready-to-eat foods
- After using the toilet
- After smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief, eating or drinking
- After touching their hair, scalp or nose
- After doing anything else that could make their hands dirty (i.e. handling garbage, touching animals, cleaning duties, handling money)

Gloves

- Food handlers should wash and dry their hands before and after wearing gloves
- Gloves must be changed regularly
- Gloves must be changed between jobs
- Gloves must be disposed of once they are removed

Hair

- Long hair should be tied back.
- Whilst hair nets are not a legislative requirement, it may be required in some cases.

Fingernails

- Fingernails should be kept short, without nail polish as the polish could flake off and fall into the food
- If wearing artificial nails or polish, gloves can be worn while handling food.

Jewellery

- Minimal jewellery should be worn (plain wedding bands only is preferable)
- If jewellery is worn on hands, extra effort must be made to clean under the jewellery during hand washing
- Avoid touching earrings and ensure that they are not loose

Adhesive Dressings and Other Bandages

- If bandages or dressings are on the hand, cover with a glove.
- It is also good practice to use brightly coloured dressings as they can be seen in the food easily if a dressing should fall off.

More information:

Contact Council and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Officer.