

SECTION 2.2 GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE

Good personal hygiene is a key factor in the prevention of foodborne illnesses. Any employee in a restaurant or foodservice operation can accidentally contaminate food. He or she might not even realize it when it happens. Successful managers help to make personal hygiene a priority.

Study Questions

After studying Section 2.2, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What personal behaviors contaminate food?
- What are the steps to proper handwashing, and when should hands be washed?
- What are proper personal cleanliness practices?
- What is proper work attire?
- How should ready-to-eat food be handled?
- When should foodhandlers be prevented from working with or around food?

How Foodhandlers Can Contaminate Food

As you have learned, foodhandlers can contaminate food in a variety of situations:

- Having a foodborne illness
- Having wounds that contain a pathogen

- Having contact with a person who is ill
- Touching their hair, faces, or bodies and then not washing their hands
- Touching anything that may contaminate their hands and then not washing them
- Having symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, or jaundice (a yellowing of the eyes or skin)
- Eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum or tobacco while preparing or serving food

Foodhandlers are not just the people who prepare food. Servers and even dishwashers are considered foodhandlers, because they either handle food directly or work with the surfaces that food will touch. To prevent foodhandlers from contaminating food, managers must create **personal hygiene** policies. These policies must address personal cleanliness, clothing, hand care, and health.

Personal Cleanliness and Work Attire

Personal cleanliness is an important part of personal hygiene. Pathogens can be found on hair and skin that aren't kept clean. These pathogens can be transferred to food and food equipment. All foodhandlers must bathe or shower before work and keep their hair clean.

Staff who wear dirty clothes at work make a bad impression on customers. More importantly, dirty clothing may carry pathogens that can cause foodborne illnesses. The following are guidelines designed to prevent foodhandlers from spreading foodborne illnesses:

- Foodhandlers should always cover their hair. Tie long hair back. Wear a clean hat or other hair covering. Figure 2.14 shows a foodhandler wearing a hat.
- Wear clean clothing every day. This includes chef coats and uniforms.
- Remove aprons and store them in the right place when leaving prep areas, for example, when taking out garbage or using the restroom. Change any apron that becomes dirty.
- Remove jewelry from hands and arms before preparing food or when working around prep areas. Do not wear watches, bracelets (including medical bracelets), or rings, except for a plain metal band. Figure 2.15 on page 97 is a photo of a foodhandler removing a watch.

Figure 2.14: Hairnets or covered hair is required by most restaurant and foodservice operations.



[on the job]

Making a Personal Statement

Many people like making a personal statement at school, at work, or out with friends. This often means favoring a particular hairstyle, wearing intricate jewelry, or applying detailed makeup. For people desiring a more permanent change, there are also facial piercings and tattoos.

These choices might not translate well into a professional environment, though, especially one in which there is the potential to contaminate food. Moreover, the ambiance of a particular restaurant, hotel, or other hospitality business might not mesh well with a less traditional "look."

A basic rule for foodhandlers is that they should never wear anything that could harm food. Jewelry could carry pathogens; it's even possible that a small bit of jewelry, such as an earring back, could fall into the food and be lost. Facial piercings, including earrings, should be removed. Hair restraints should always be worn, especially for long hair. Wearing too much makeup can be a problem, too. When the kitchen becomes hot, sweat can cause particles of makeup to contaminate food, so be moderate when considering cosmetic choices.

The rules are somewhat different for front-of-house employees, who primarily interact with customers. It is often acceptable for such employees to wear more jewelry than their coworkers in the kitchen; the same goes for makeup, and there is sometimes more flexibility with hairstyles as well. On the other hand, tattoos that might go unnoticed in kitchens might raise eyebrows in the dining room and must often be covered; in fact, some organizations do not hire employees with tattoos in particular places, such as necks and hands. Facial piercings, depending on their size and placement, might also be forbidden. Much depends on the style of the particular operation.

Handwashing

Handwashing is the most important part of personal hygiene. It may seem like an obvious thing to do, but many foodhandlers do not wash their hands correctly or as often as they should.



Figure 2.15: Foodservice workers should take off any jewelry before working with food.

Foodhandlers must wash their hands before they start work. They must also do it after the following activities:

- Using the restroom
- Handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
- Touching the hair, face, or body
- Sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
- Eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum or tobacco
- Handling chemicals that might affect food safety
- Taking out garbage
- Clearing tables or busing dirty dishes
- Touching clothing or aprons
- Handling money
- Touching anything else that may contaminate hands, such as dirty equipment, work surfaces, or towels

Figure 2.16 shows the steps for proper handwashing. The whole process should take about 20 seconds. Foodhandlers should wash their hands only in a designated handwashing sink. If they are not careful, they can contaminate their hands again after washing them. Using a paper towel to turn off the faucet and to open the door when leaving the restroom can prevent this.






	<p>1. Wet hands and arms with running water as hot as you can comfortably stand (at least 100°F).</p>
	<p>2. Apply soap. Apply enough to build up a good lather.</p>
	<p>3. Scrub hands and arms vigorously for 10 to 15 seconds. Clean under fingernails and between fingers.</p>
	<p>4. Rinse hands and arms thoroughly under running water.</p>
	<p>5. Dry hands and arms with a single-use paper towel or warm-air hand dryer.</p>

Figure 2.16: Steps for proper handwashing.

[trends]

Hand Sanitizers: You Can Even Carry It in Your Pocket

Hand sanitizers are now commonplace. They were a bright new idea not that long ago. Isopropyl alcohol is a good skin sanitizer, but it is a very thin and runny liquid, so product-development chemists mixed alcohol with some glycerin to thicken it.

Now you can pump it into your hands through a dispenser and easily rub it onto your skin. Brilliant! A new foam version is now available, that comes in an upside-down dispenser that does not require you to touch a pump with a freshly washed hand. Even more brilliant!

The most important thing to keep in mind with sanitizers is that they do not clean away dirt or anything else. They should never take the place of handwashing in a restaurant or foodservice operation. They kill most germs, but not all. Nothing replaces the need for you to completely wash your hands before applying a hand sanitizer. If you choose to use sanitizers after washing your hands, wait until the sanitizer is completely dry before handling food or equipment.

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

Handwashing is very important to good hygiene. Everyone knows how to wash his or her hands, right? WRONG. Most people do not wash long enough or carefully enough. Experts say you should scrub your hands long enough to sing "Happy Birthday" twice.

Hand Maintenance

Besides handwashing, hands need additional care to prevent spreading pathogens. Figure 2.17 illustrates hand care guidelines for foodhandlers.





	Keep fingernails short and clean. Long fingernails can be difficult to keep clean.
	Do not wear false nails. They can break off into food and are difficult to keep clean.
	Do not wear nail polish. It can disguise dirt under nails and flake off into food.
	Wear a bandage over wounds on hands and arms. Make sure it keeps the wound from leaking. Also wear a single-use glove or a finger cot (a finger cover) over bandages on hands or fingers. These will protect the bandage and keep it from falling off into food.

Figure 2.17: Hand care for foodhandlers.

[fast fact]

Did You Know...?

80 percent of infectious diseases are transmitted by touching surfaces that have germs on them.

Source: WebMD

Bare-Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Food

Using bare hands to handle ready-to-eat food can increase the risk of contaminating it. Gloves, tongs, and deli tissue can help keep food safe by creating a barrier between hands and food. Figure 2.18 shows how to use gloves correctly.

Work Requirements Related to Illness

Restaurants and foodservice operations have a responsibility to ensure that their employees do not spread foodborne illnesses. Foodhandlers who are sick can spread pathogens to food. Depending on the illness, they might not be able to work with food until they recover.

Table 2.3 explains how managers should handle employees with illnesses.

Figure 2.18: How to use gloves correctly.

- Never use gloves in place of handwashing.
- Wash hands before putting on gloves and when changing to a new pair. Otherwise, dirty hands might contaminate the clean gloves.
- Make sure the gloves fit. They shouldn't be too loose or too tight.
- Never rinse, wash, or reuse gloves.
- Gloves should be changed as soon as they become dirty or torn. They should also be changed before beginning a different task; at least every four hours during continual use; and after handling raw meat, seafood, or poultry, and before handling ready-to-eat food.



Table 2.3: Handling Employee Illnesses

Situation	Procedure
The foodhandler has a sore throat with a fever.	The foodhandler cannot work with or around food. If the operation serves mostly high-risk customers (such as a nursing home), then the foodhandler shouldn't be in the operation.
The foodhandler has at least one of these symptoms: Vomiting Diarrhea Jaundice	The foodhandler shouldn't be in the operation.
The foodhandler has been diagnosed with a foodborne illness.	The foodhandler shouldn't be in the operation.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- The following personal behaviors of foodhandlers can contaminate food:
 - Having a foodborne illness
 - Having wounds that contain a pathogen
 - Having contact with a person who is ill
 - Touching the hair, face, or body and then not washing their hands
 - Touching anything that may contaminate their hands and not washing them

- Having symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, or jaundice
- Eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum or tobacco while preparing or serving food
- The steps to proper handwashing are as follows:
 1. Wet hands and arms with running water as hot as you can comfortably stand (at least 100°F).
 2. Apply enough soap to build up a good lather.
 3. Scrub hands and arms vigorously for 10 to 15 seconds. Clean under fingernails and between fingers.
 4. Rinse hands and arms thoroughly under running water.
 5. Dry hands and arms completely with a single-use paper towel or warm-air hand dryer.
- Hands should be washed before starting work. They also must be washed after these activities: using the restroom; handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood; touching the hair, face, or body; sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue; eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum or tobacco; handling chemicals that might affect food safety; taking out garbage; clearing tables or busing dirty dishes; touching clothing or aprons; handling money; and touching anything else that may contaminate hands.
- Personal cleanliness practices include bathing or showering before work, keeping hair clean, wearing clean clothes, removing jewelry from hands and arms, and keeping nails clean.
- Proper work attire includes always covering hair, wearing clean clothes, removing aprons and storing them in the right place after leaving the prep area, and removing jewelry from hands and arms.
- Using bare hands to handle ready-to-eat food can increase the risk of contaminating it. Use gloves, tongs, or deli tissue when handling ready-to-eat food.
- Employees shouldn't work with or around food when they have a sore throat with a fever. They should be prevented from being in the operation when they are vomiting, have diarrhea or jaundice, or have a foodborne illness.

Section 2.2 Review Questions

- ① What personal behaviors can contaminate food?
- ② What should a foodhandler do if he or she cuts a finger while preparing food?
- ③ Identify the proper handwashing procedure.
- ④ List all the instances in which foodhandlers should wash their hands.
- ⑤ Melisa Bouchard believes that knowledge and communication help to ensure food safety. Create a scenario that shows how this would apply in a restaurant or foodservice operation.
- ⑥ Michael vomited early this morning, but he has come into work because he is feeling better. Then he starts to feel worse. Obviously, he came back to work too soon. What should happen?
- ⑦ What kind of personal habits do you have that might cause problems when handling food? What could you do to remind yourself not to do these things while handling food and equipment that comes into contact with food?
- ⑧ We all want to be seen as dedicated employees. When should you stay at home from work? Why?

Section 2.2 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: What's Your Style?

Brainstorm as a group about the balance between personal choice and professional appearance. Assuming you are investing in a restaurant, what type of "look" do you want your employees to portray? Do you foresee any food safety problems with this look? Create an ad for the positions of manager, server, and line cook for your restaurant. Include information on the ambience and environment that you wish to portray.

2. Activity: Hygiene Policy

What are the personal hygiene requirements for foodhandlers in your community? Contact your local health department or other authority to learn more. Develop a poster to share this information with the rest of the class, including the name of the local authority. Based on this information, create a hygiene policy for your restaurant employees.

3. Critical Thinking: What Should I Do?

You are the manager of a local restaurant. One of your employees arrives at work complaining of a stomachache. Today will be a busy day; another staff member is on vacation, and there are already many dinner reservations. What do you do? Write two paragraphs describing your response and why.