

Why is hand washing important?

Our hands collect bacteria from everything we touch and carry them to new places.

For example, after going to the toilet our hands can carry bacteria from our bodies to the food we prepare. Some bacteria can cause food poisoning - so by washing our hands thoroughly we can prevent food poisoning bacteria getting into food.

Why should hands be washed in a designated hand washing facility?

The thorough washing and drying of hands is an important activity in the prevention of food poisoning.

All food premises are required to have hand washing facilities located where they can be easily accessed. Hand washing facilities must be provided with a supply of warm running water.

If there are toilets in the food premises, then hand washing facilities need to be provided adjacent to the toilets or toilet cubicles.

Why use Soap?

Soap, when combined with warm water and a thorough washing action, assists in removal of bacteria, dirt, grease and surplus skin cells.

The use of liquid soap helps to reduce the risk of spreading bacteria.

A scrubbing brush may be of assistance to remove stubborn matter not easily removed by thorough hand washing alone.

What is the best way to dry hands?

Use disposable paper towels or hot air drying to dry hands without the risk of spreading bacteria.

Shared towels means you are sharing bacteria.

It is important that tea towels are not used to dry hands. Bacteria from your hands will stick to the towel and spread to equipment, crockery, cutlery and food contact surfaces.

When should I wash my hands?

Before

- Commencing work activities
- Handling food

After

- Using the toilet
- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Scratching hair, nose or other body parts
- Handling rubbish or doing any dirty jobs
- Smoking

Between

- Handling raw and cooked food

Gloves or No Gloves?

Wearing latex gloves is not a substitute for thorough hand washing using soap, warm running water and proper hand drying.

If gloves are to be used, hands must be thoroughly washed before applying the gloves.

Gloves are cheap and disposable and if used must not be washed for re-use. After discarding the gloves, hands must be properly washed with water and soap, as bacteria build up on the hands while the gloves are being worn.

The outside of gloves harbour bacteria and can lead to cross-contamination from one food preparation activity to another. It is essential that gloves are changed regularly and between each activity.

Using gloves without thorough hand washing will allow harmful bacteria on the hands to contaminate the gloves and cause the contamination of food.

Gloves are fragile, gloves leak and the fingertips can break off.

The use of gloves can be supported to protect hands against allergies, dermatitis and some injuries.

References:

Curtis V., Cairncross S. *Effect of washing hands with soap on diarrhoea risk in the community: a systematic review. The Lancet* 2003; 3: 275-281.

Snyder, O. *Why gloves are not the solution to the fingertip washing problem. Hospitality Institute of Technology and Management.* 2001;1-3.

Further information

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Handwashing and Gloves in Food Premises



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Wash Your Hands Properly and Help Prevent the Spread of Disease.

1. Wet



2. Soap



3. Rub Hands Thoroughly



4. Rinse



5. Dry



OR

5. Dry

