

Health and hygiene for food handlers

If you're a food handler, making sure you don't contaminate food through illness or unclean habits is very important to keep food safe to eat.

What are the requirements?

Under Standard 3.2.2 - Food Safety Practices and General Requirements, as a food handler you need to do whatever you can to make sure you do not make food unsafe or unsuitable.

Be clean and careful

- wash and dry your hands thoroughly
- 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 your 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 are sick or have contaminated food in any way.

Wash your hands properly

- use the sink provided just for hand washing
- wet your hands under warm running water
- lather them with soap and thoroughly scrub fingers, palms, wrists, back of hands and under nails for about 15 seconds
- rinse hands under warm running water
- turn off taps using a paper towel or elbow
- thoroughly dry your hands with a single-use towel.

When to wash your hands

- before you start handling food or go back to handling food after other tasks
- before working with ready-to-eat food after handling raw food
- after using the toilet
- after smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or tissue, eating or drinking
- after touching your hair, scalp, nose, etc.
- after doing anything else that could make your hands dirty, like handling garbage, touching animals or children, or cleaning duties.

What if I'm sick?

Some illnesses can be passed to people through food – these are called foodborne illnesses (e.g. gastro and hepatitis A). If you know or think you have a foodborne illness (e.g. you have vomiting, diarrhoea or fever):

- tell your supervisor
- do not handle food if it's likely to become contaminated
- only return to food handling when a doctor says you are well enough (usually 48 hours after symptoms have stopped).

Need more information?

Safe Food Australia is a guide to the food safety standards in Chapter 3 of the Food Standards Code. Health and hygiene is under Standard 3.2.2 clauses 13-18. Hand basins, toilets and storage are also in Standard 3.2.3 clauses 14-16. Copies of the guide are available at [on our website](#) or by emailing information@foodstandards.gov.au.