

Personal Hygiene

Bacteria can't move by themselves. They are spread by food handlers with poor personal hygiene habits. Dirty hands, clothing, sneezes, coughs, infected cuts and even jewellery can contaminate food.

The exact amount of foodborne illness in Canada is difficult to estimate because many cases are not reported. However, we do know that there are millions of cases each year.

One in 4 cases of food borne illness can be directly linked to poor personal hygiene. As a food handler you must do your part to reduce illness. Be more aware of your personal hygiene:

- Wash your hands – dirty hands can easily contaminate food.
- Do not handle food – if you are sick with vomiting or diarrhea.
- Wear disposable gloves – if you have cuts or sores on your hands.
- Keep fingernails short – long fingernails, real or artificial, can trap dirt or other contaminants. Keep nails short, clean and free of polish.
- Remove your jewellery – when working with food because food particles can accumulate in jewellery and contaminate other foods.
- Wear a clean uniform – a dirty apron is often contaminated with bacteria.
- Confine your hair – hold it in place with a hat or hairnet so it is less likely to contaminate food and your hands.

- Use the staff change room – to change clothing, brush hair or to apply make-up.
- Be aware – of your bad habits such as biting your nails, rubbing your eyes and touching your face and hair.

The Myth about Glove Use

Wearing disposable gloves when handling food is NOT a substitute for proper handwashing. Wash your hands before putting gloves on and after removing them.

Remember that gloves become dirty and contaminated just like bare hands. Gloves must be changed often, whenever they become contaminated.

Gloves are a tool that can be used to prevent cross contamination but if not used properly they can contaminate food and cause an outbreak of foodborne illness.

Always wash your hands:

- before handling food
 - after using the toilet
 - after handling diapers
 - after touching hazardous or raw food
 - after touching contaminated surfaces such as cutting boards, dirty dishes, bags of garbage or garbage containers
 - after sneezing or coughing into your hands
 - after touching your face or hair
 - before and after smoking
 - after handling money
 - after handling chemicals, such as cleaning products
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