

## Personal hygiene for food handlers

Under the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*, food handlers have specific legal responsibilities related to their health and hygiene.

### Are you a food handler?

A food handler is anyone who works in a food business and who handles food, or surfaces that are likely to be in contact with food, such as cutlery, plates, bowls, or chopping boards. A food handler may do many different things for a food business. Examples include making, cooking, preparing, serving, packing, displaying and storing food. Food handlers can also be involved in manufacturing, producing, collecting, extracting, processing, transporting, delivering, thawing or preserving food.

### What about personal hygiene?

Food handlers' personal hygiene practices and cleanliness must minimise the risk of food contamination. The most important things a food handler needs to know is that they must:

- do whatever is reasonable to prevent their body, anything from their body or anything they are wearing, coming into contact with food or food contact surfaces
- do whatever is reasonable to stop unnecessary contact with ready-to-eat foods, such as salads or cooked meat
- wear clean outer clothing, appropriate for the type of work they do
- make sure bandages or dressings on any exposed parts of the body are covered with a waterproof covering
- not eat over unprotected food or surfaces likely to come in contact with food
- not sneeze, blow or cough over unprotected food or surfaces likely to come into contact with food
- not spit, smoke or use tobacco or similar preparations where food is handled
- not urinate or defecate except in a toilet

### Health of food handlers

Food handlers are required to inform the food safety supervisor or licensee when they are ill. There are requirements for health of food handlers that require a person to be excluded from handling food if they are ill with vomiting, diarrhoea, fever or jaundice, food-borne disease, sore throat with fever, infected skin lesions or have discharges from eyes, nose or ears.

## Hand washing

Food handlers are expected to wash their hands whenever their hands are likely to contaminate food. This includes washing their hands:

- immediately before working with ready-to-eat food
- immediately after handling raw meat or processed (or cut) fruit or vegetables
- immediately after using the toilet
- before starting to handle food or returning to handling food after other work
- immediately after smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, eating, drinking or using tobacco or similar substances
- after touching hair, scalp or a body opening

## How should food handlers wash their hands?

Use the hand washing facilities provided by the business. Sinks used to prepare food or wash dishes, must not be used to wash hands. Hand washing facilities must have warm running water, soap and single-use paper towels or other means of effectively drying hands.

There are five steps that should be followed when washing hands:



*Courtesy Cormorant Technical Services P/L.*

## For further information

Queensland Health has a variety of fact sheets with detailed information on food safety. Fact sheets can be accessed from the Queensland Health website at [www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/foodsafety).

Contact your local government if you have any further questions. Contact details can be found at [www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory.html](http://www.dlgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory.html) or your local White Pages.