HAND WASHING IN FOOD BUSINESSES

Correct hand washing is important
Correctly washing your hands is an important step you can take to minimise the risk of foodborne illness in your food business.
Thorough hand washing physically removes dirt, food waste, grease and harmful bacteria and viruses from your hands.
It is a legal requirement for food handlers to wash their hands.

Hand washing facilities
The Food Standards Code requires food premises to have complying hand washing facilities in areas where food handlers work if their hands are likely to be a source of contamination of food.
Additionally, if there are toilets on the food premises, hand washing facilities must be provided immediately adjacent to the toilets. Premises must have complying hand washing facilities.
Hand washing facilities must be:
• permanent fixtures
• connected to or provided with a supply of warm running potable water
• of a size that allows easy and effective hand washing

Penalties can apply to the food handler for failing to wash his/her hands correctly.

How to properly wash hands
Using the hand washing facilities provided in the food business, follow these steps:
1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, warm, running water.
5. Dry with a clean towel (preferably paper) or air-dry them before preparing or eating food.

Use of nail brushes and antibacterial gels
Clean and undamaged nail brushes can be used during hand washing to assist in removing dough and other hard to remove food residues.
Antibacterial gels that are suitable for use around food preparation can be used in addition to hand washing.
Antibacterial gels on their own are not a substitute for hand washing.

**Hand wash issues**

If an authorised officer from the NSW Food Authority or local council identifies a hand washing or hand wash facility issue that needs to be rectified, a variety of compliance actions can be initiated.

For further information on the circumstances in which compliance action may be initiated, see the *NSW Food Authority Compliance Policy* and the *NSW Food Authority Enforcement Policy* at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)

**More information**

Your local council environmental health officer can help you with any questions you have about inspection findings or compliance action. They can help clarify what work needs to be done, and in what timeframe.

- visit the Food Authority’s website [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)
- phone the helpline on 1300 552 406

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About the NSW Food Authority: The NSW Food Authority is the government organisation that helps ensure NSW food is safe and correctly labelled. It works with consumers, industry and other government organisations to minimise food poisoning by providing information about and regulating the safe production, storage, transport, promotion and preparation of food.

Note: This information is a general summary and cannot cover all situations. Food businesses are required to comply with all of the provisions of the Food Standards Code and the *Food Act 2003* (NSW).