

Handwashing 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
- accessible
- provided with soap and single use towels (or air drier) and a container for used towels
- clearly designated for the sole purpose of washing hands, arms and face.

Some premises are required to provide hand washing facilities fitted with non-hand operated taps, e.g. abattoirs, butcher shops etc. Check with your local council or the NSW Food Authority.

When hands need to be washed

A food handler must wash their hands before:

- preparing and cooking food
- handling food, especially ready-to-eat foods
- serving food.

A food handler must wash their hands after:

- using the toilet

- handling raw meat, raw poultry or raw eggs
- smoking, sneezing, coughing, blowing his/her nose, eating, drinking or touching his/her hair, scalp or body opening.

Penalties can apply to the food handler for failing to wash their 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

More information

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).

- Visit the Food Authority's website foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
 - Email the helpline at food.contact@dpi.nsw.gov.au
 - Phone the helpline on 1300 552 406
-

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2023. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing June, 2023. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.
