

Act on Food Safety

PRINT POST APPROVED PP255003/05706

WINTER 2007

Who is a food handler?

A food handler is anyone who works in a food business and who either handles food or touches surfaces that are likely to be in contact with food such as cutlery, plates and bowls. 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, treating, transporting, delivering, thawing or preserving food.

What must a food handler do if she or he is sick?

Food handlers must not handle any food where there is a chance they might make the food unsafe or unsuitable because of their illness. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Food handlers must tell their work supervisor if they have any of the following symptoms while they are at work — vomiting, diarrhoea, fever with or without a sore throat. The only exception to this is if the food handler knows that he/she has these symptoms for a different reason. For example, a food handler may be vomiting at work because of pregnancy.



DID YOU KNOW? In the right conditions, a single bacterium can multiply into more than 2 million bacteria in just seven hours.

What if a food handler has a food-borne illness?

Food handlers must inform their supervisor if they have been diagnosed as having or carrying a food-borne illness, such as Gastroenteritis, listeriosis and hepatitis A.

If a food handler stays at work and does other work, he or she must do everything reasonable to make sure they do not contaminate any food.

IN THIS ISSUE

- What must a food handler do if he or she is sick;
- Food handler's personal hygiene;
- Hand washing and Use of Gloves;
- NSW Prosecution – Sulphur dioxide in minced meat;
- A reminder about the introduction of mandatory food safety programs for four identified highest risk food business sectors in ACT; and
- Smoking laws.

What if a food handler has skin injuries or sores or is otherwise unwell?

Food handlers must tell their supervisor about any infections or conditions like a cold or other problem that may result in discharges from their ears or nose or eyes. If the food handler stays on at work, an infected sore must be completely covered by a bandage and clothing or by a waterproof covering if on an area of bare skin.

What if a food handler knows or suspects he or she might have contaminated some food?

Food handlers must tell their supervisor if they know or think they may have made any food unsafe

or unsuitable to eat. For example, jewellery may have fallen into food.

What about personal hygiene?

Appropriate personal hygiene practices and cleanliness minimise the risk of food contamination.

The most important things food handlers need to know:

- 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 food;

- wear clean outer clothing, depending on the type of work they do;
- make sure bandages or dressings on any exposed parts of the body are covered with a waterproof covering;
- do not eat over uncovered food or surfaces likely to come in contact with food;
- do not sneeze, blow or cough over uncovered food or surfaces likely to come into contact with food;
- do not spit, smoke or use tobacco or similar preparations where food is handled.

Nothing to be sneezed at! The very tiny droplets spread by sneezing can travel 2-3 metres, at a speed of around 150 km/hour — a very efficient way of spreading germs!

Source: www.allergycapital.com.au

Reproduced with permission of Food Standards Australia New Zealand. Source: www.foodstandards.gov.au

Hand washing steps

1. use the hand washing facilities provided.
2. wet hands with warm water, then apply soap.
3. rub hands including wrists, between fingers and around thumbs.

4. rinse well and dry thoroughly.
5. use a clean dry towel, disposable towel, or hand dryer.

When to wash hands

Before

- starting work
- handling food
- eating
- putting on gloves

Between

- handling raw food and food that is ready to eat.
- handling raw food and touching any other food or kitchen utensils

After

- handling or touching raw food
- using the bathroom
- eating, drinking, or using tobacco
- coughing, sneezing, spitting, blowing or wiping the nose
- touching or scratching any part of the body – nose, ears, teeth, arms, hair, scalp, sores or cuts
- handling money
- removing gloves
- handling rubbish or other waste
- performing cleaning duties such as wiping benches or mopping



Gloves

Wearing gloves is not a substitute for thorough hand washing using soap, warm running water and proper hand drying. If gloves are to be used, hands must be thoroughly washed before putting on gloves.

The Food Standards Code does not require food handlers to use gloves.

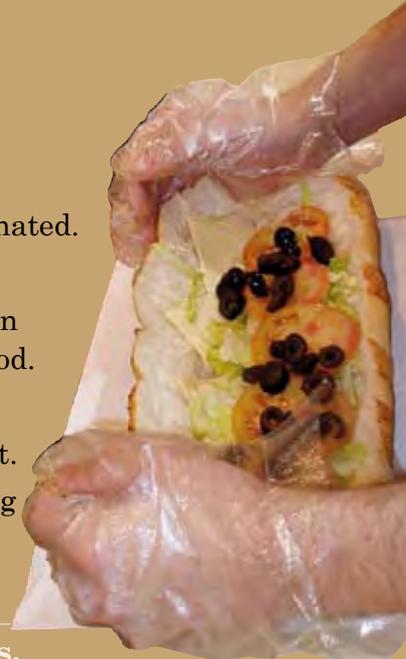
If gloves are used, care must be taken to avoid contaminating food by only using them for one continuous task and then discarding them. The outside of gloves harbour bacteria and can lead to cross contamination from one food preparation activity to another.

It is essential to change gloves regularly and between each activity. Using gloves without thorough hand washing will allow harmful bacteria on the hands to contaminate

the gloves and cause the contamination of food.

Change your gloves:

- If they become contaminated.
- If they tear.
- When switching between raw and ready-to-eat food.
- When changing tasks.
- After taking rubbish out.
- After sweeping, mopping and cleaning.



If you are using gloves, always wash your hands before putting on gloves and after removing gloves.

Smoking Laws Affect Your Business

Since 1 December 2006, all enclosed public places are required to be “non-smoking”.

Some restaurants and cafés with outdoor areas may be affected by smoke drift from outdoor tables. Under the law, occupiers must ensure smoke does not drift into the indoor area, which are enclosed public places.

You may wish to consider designating outdoor tables near windows and entrances as non-smoking. “No-smoking” signs are a good way to let your customers know where smoking can take place without the smoke drifting indoors.

The smoking status of an outdoor area may also change depending on the placement of awnings, plastic walls, umbrellas, etc.

For more information please contact the Office of Regulatory Service, phone (02) 6207 0400.

Hard to believe but TRUE

A report published by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing has documented that 5.4 million cases of food borne illness occurred in Australia every year. Contaminated food causes approximately 18,000 hospitalisations and 120 deaths every year. The majority of food borne illness is due to gastroenteritis, which causes 2.1 million lost days off work, 1.2 million people to visit a doctor, and 300,000 prescriptions for antibiotics.

NEWS – NSW Prosecution – \$7500 fine for Illegal Use of Preservative

A NSW butcher who illegally used a preservative in mincemeat and an excessive amount in sausages has been fined \$7500 in a Sydney court.

NSW Food Authority Director General George Davey said that a routine inspection of the butcher shop by NSW Food Authority inspectors revealed Sulphur Dioxide [SO₂] had been illegally added to a batch of fresh mince and was also detected in excessive amounts in a batch of beef sausages.

The *Food Standards Code* prohibits the addition of preservatives including sulphur dioxide to minced meat products. The reason for this is that this particular preservative masks the ageing and hence deterioration of the meat. In addition, the preservative can cause a range of health effects in some individuals such as gastric irritation, nausea, diarrhoea, skin rashes and asthma attacks.

The Health Protection Service regularly conducts inspections of retail meat outlets in the ACT to check the compliance with the sulphur dioxide requirements of the *Food Standards Code*. In the last two years there were successful prosecutions of two butchers, who illegally added sulphur dioxide to fresh mince meat.



Introduction of Food Safety Programs for Highest Risk Food Businesses in the ACT

Our previous issue provided detailed information about the new food safety requirements.

In summary, the following highest risk food businesses in the ACT will need to introduce mandatory food safety programs: hospitals; aged care and nursing homes; childcare centres which provide potentially hazardous food to children; meals on wheels (house-bound clients); wholesalers of oysters and other bivalves; catering operations (public clients – general); and producers of manufactured and fermented meats.

Timeframes for the introduction of mandatory food safety programs

Producers, harvesters, processors and distributors of raw oysters and other bivalves should have had food safety programs introduced by **26 May 2007**.

Producers of manufactured and fermented meats will need to have food safety programs by **24 November 2007**. Butchers who smoke meat and produce salamis are covered by this requirement.

For food services in which **potentially hazardous food is served to vulnerable populations** (e.g. hospitals, nursing homes, childcare centers) mandatory food safety programs will come into effect on **5 October 2008**.

It is expected that a standard for **catering operations serving food to the general public**, (for example, spit roast caterers) will be finalised by the end of 2007. This means that catering businesses captured by the requirements of this standard will need to introduce food safety programs **two years after the gazettal of the standard**.

If you have any questions relating to the introduction of food safety programs, please call the Health Protection Service on 6205 1700. Remember, your public health officers are a good source of advice and assistance on all food safety issues.



ENGLISH	If you need interpreting help, telephone:
ARABIC	إذا احتجت لمساعدة في الترجمة الشفوية، إتصل برقم الهاتف:
CHINESE	如果你需要传译员的帮助，请打电话:
CROATIAN	Ako trebate pomoć tumača telefonirajte:
GREEK	Αν χρειάζεστε διερμηνεία τηλεφωνήστε στο
ITALIAN	Se avete bisogno di un interprete, telefonate al numero:
PERSIAN	اگر به ترجمه شفاهی احتیاج دارید به این شماره تلفن کنید:
PORTUGUESE	Se você precisar da ajuda de um intérprete, telefone:
SERBIAN	Ako vam je potrebna pomoć prevodioca telefoniрајте:
SPANISH	Si necesita la asistencia de un intérprete, llame al:
TURKISH	Tercümana ihtiyacınız varsa lütfen telefon ediniz:
VIETNAMESE	Nếu bạn cần một người thông-ngôn hãy gọi điện-thoai:

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETER SERVICE 131 450
Canberra and District - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
HEALTH CARE INTERPRETERS 6205 3333

Contact details

**Health Protection Service,
ACT Health**

Phone (02) 6205 1700

Fax (02) 6205 1705

Email hps@act.gov.au

Address

**Howard Florey Cenentary House,
25 Mulley Street, Holder 2611**

Postal

**Locked Bag 5,
Weston Creek ACT 2611**

