

**Introduction**

Poor personal hygiene is a major contributing factor to food borne illness. People can transfer many bacteria and viruses that cause food borne illnesses. The bacteria and viruses can be carried on a foodservice worker's nose, hair, skin, and under the fingernails. People that handle food can keep harmful bacteria and viruses from contaminating food by proper hand washing.

**Hand Washing  
Procedures**

Although washing hands seems easy, following the proper hand washing technique helps ensure clean hands and safe food. Proper hand washing is a barrier to food contaminants and is every employee's responsibility. Follow these simple recommended steps:

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
1	Go to the nearest well-equipped hand sink; turn on the water until warm water is running.
2	Wet hands and arms with warm water.
3	Use soap; lather hands and the lower portion of your exposed arms.
4	Wash hands and the lower portion of your arms thoroughly. A clean nail brush may be used to clean under the nails and between fingers.
5	Wash for about 20 seconds (you may wish to sing "happy birthday" as the song takes about 20 seconds to sing).
6	Rinse hands and arms thoroughly under warm running water.
7	Dry hands with a disposable towel or hot air dryer.
8	Shut off water with a paper towel and dispose of the paper towel in the nearest trash container.

**When to Wash**

Bacteria can hitchhike on people; therefore, it is important to wash your hands often, especially after any possible contamination. **Always** wash your hands:

- After using the toilet.
- After coughing, sneezing, eating, drinking, smoking, or touching your skin or hair.
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils.
- Immediately before starting any food preparation and after breaks.
- As often as necessary during food preparation to prevent contamination, especially when working with raw foods or when changing tasks.

When using plastic gloves, the same rules apply. Remember to wash hands before wearing gloves, and wash or change gloves after breaks, touching raw foods, changing tasks, or any other potential contamination.

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**Proper Hand  
Washing Facilities**

Maintain proper hand washing facilities and set an example to encourage employees to practice good personal hygiene.

- Provide an accessible hand wash sink(s) with hot and cold running water. Do not use the sink for any purpose other than hand washing. Ensure that the sink(s) is/are located as closely to work areas as possible (the more hand sinks, the better).
- Provide soap, paper disposable towels, and a nailbrush. Check the towel dispensers and soap supplies often, and keep extra hand washing supplies on hand.
- Post hand washing signs to remind employees to wash hands often.
- Train employees in proper hand washing techniques. Explain why hand washing is important to food safety. Monitor employees to ensure good personal hygiene practices.