

MINIMIZING BARE HAND CONTACT WITH READY TO EAT FOODS

WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON FOR NOT TOUCHING READY-TO-EAT FOODS WITH BARE HANDS? The main reason is to prevent disease-causing viruses and bacteria that may be in or on your body from contaminating food you touch. Viruses and bacteria are invisible to the naked eye, but may be present on your hands, particularly if you do not effectively wash your hands after using the toilet.

WHAT ARE “READY-TO-EAT” FOODS? Any food that will not be thoroughly cooked or reheated before being served to the customer. For example:

- Prepared fresh fruits and vegetables served raw;
- Cold salads;
- Cold meats and sandwiches;
- Bread, toast, rolls and baked goods;
- Garnishes such as parsley, oranges, lemon wedges, pickles, chips;
- Fruit or vegetables used for mixed drinks;
- French-fries, tater tots, potato wedges, etc.;
- Ice served to customers.

HOW CAN I PREPARE OR SERVE READY-TO-EAT FOOD WITHOUT TOUCHING IT WITH MY BARE HANDS? You may use any of the following physical barriers to prepare or serve foods without bare hand contact:

- Utensils – such as tongs, spatulas and spoons;
- Deli tissue, waxed paper, aluminum foil or napkins;
- Disposable gloves.

WHAT HAPPENS IF GLOVES, DELI TISSUE OR UTENSILS ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO PREPARE READY-TO-EAT FOODS? You cannot touch the food without these barriers; report this problem to the person in charge.

I AM CONCERNED THAT MY DISPOSABLE GLOVES WILL MELT AROUND HEAT SOURCES. WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING? Some disposable gloves, especially poly gloves, will melt when exposed to heat. If you will be using disposable gloves near a heat source choose vinyl or latex gloves. They will not melt if exposed to common food service temperatures.

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT BEING ALLERGIC TO GLOVES. WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING? Latex gloves may cause an allergic reaction so you may want to ask your person in charge for other kinds of gloves.



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CAN READY-TO-EAT FOODS BE TOUCHED WITH BARE HANDS IF THE HANDS ARE WASHED OR IF AN ANTIBACTERIAL SOAP OR SANITIZER IS USED? No. Sometimes food employees may not effectively wash their hands, possibly leaving behind disease-causing bacteria and viruses. In addition, hand sanitizers are not effective in killing all disease-causing organisms that can make your customers sick. Excellent personal hand washing practices coupled with using barriers like tongs, papers and gloves on ready-to-eat food are the only actual effective methods of protecting your customers.

AM I REQUIRED TO WEAR DISPOSABLE GLOVES IF I HANDLE READY-TO-EAT FOODS? No. Using disposable gloves is only one option in minimizing bare hand contact of ready-to-eat foods. Other options include using deli tissues, utensils, napkins, waxed paper and other food wraps. Choose the method that works best for the task you are doing. There are also many kinds of utensils and gloves. You need to choose the one that will best serve your needs for a specific task.

DO I STILL HAVE TO WASH MY HANDS IF I WEAR GLOVES? Absolutely! Hands must always be effectively washed before putting on gloves. Foodborne illness is best prevented when excellent hand washing is coupled with using a physical barrier.

WHEN DO I HAVE TO CHANGE OR REPLACE MY GLOVES? Always change gloves after they have become contaminated. A good rule of thumb to follow is, when you change tasks you will need to change your gloves. Before handling ready-to-eat foods, remember to:

- Wash your hands;
- Put on a new pair of gloves;
- Replace gloves often, especially after taking a break;
- Wash your hands every time you change gloves unless a glove change is not the result of contamination;
- Gloves must be replaced each time you handle raw meat, an unclean item, or complete a task that would otherwise contaminate your hands.

CAN I USE A HAND ANTISEPTIC SOLUTION AS A HAND DIP FOR FREQUENT SWITCHING OF GLOVES? Yes, the hand sanitizer/ dip used must:

- be an approved drug that is listed in the FDA publication *Approved Drug Products with Therapeutic Equivalence Evaluations*
- Be applied only to hands that are first washed appropriately from following the Food Code, WAC 246-215-02305 requirements.

If a hand antiseptic or a hand antiseptic solution used as a hand dip does not meet the requirements, use must be:

- Followed by thorough hand rinsing in clean water before hand contact with FOOD or by the use of gloves; or
- A hand antiseptic solution used as a hand dip must be maintained clean and at a strength equivalent to at least 100 MG/L chlorine.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A BARE HAND CONTACT EXEMPTION? Yes. There is a process to apply for a bare hand contact exemption. Each application is considered on a case by case basis for the need and application of the exemption.