

Personal hygiene for people working with food

Information for food premises

Don't let your food turn nasty!

Food poisoning is a serious health problem. It can cause severe illness and even death.

Food poisoning can seriously damage the reputation of a business, damage the reputation of the food industry, and damage the jobs of many workers.

As a person who handles food – whether you are a kitchen hand, a food process worker, a shop assistant or a waiter – you have an important responsibility to handle food safely. So:

- protect other people from getting sick
- protect your reputation in the food industry
- protect your business, and
- protect your job.

Victorian and Australian food safety laws are designed to ensure that food that is sold is safe to eat and free of any contamination.

All Victorian businesses and organisations that make, display, transport or prepare food for sale must comply with the national Food Safety Standards and Victorian food laws. This includes following requirements that apply to certain classes of food premises, that is:

Class 1 and 2

- Follow the business food safety program
- Follow the advice given by the food safety supervisor, unless your premises is exempt.

Class 3

- Complete the required basic records about your food handling practices and keep them onsite.

Your council will advise you about the class of your food premises.

Prevent food poisoning by practicing good personal hygiene

- Thoroughly wash and dry your hands before handling food, and wash and dry them again frequently during work.
- Dry your hands with clean towels, disposable paper towels or under an air dryer.
- Never smoke, chew gum, spit, change a baby's nappy or eat in a food handling or food storage area.
- Never cough or sneeze over food or where food is prepared or stored.
- Wear clean protective clothing, such as an apron.
- Keep your spare clothes and other personal items away from where food is stored and prepared.
- If you have long hair, tie it back or cover it.
- Keep your nails short so they are easy to clean, and don't wear nail polish as it can chip into the food.
- Avoid wearing jewellery, or only wear plain banded rings and sleeper earrings.
- If you have cuts or wounds, make sure they are completely covered by a waterproof wound strip or a bandage. Use brightly coloured wound strips, so they can be seen easily if they fall off.
- Wear disposable gloves over the top of the wound strip if you have wounds on your hands.
- Change disposable gloves regularly.
- Advise your supervisor if you feel unwell and don't handle food.

Personal hygiene

An important way to prevent food contamination is to maintain a high standard of personal hygiene and cleanliness.

Even healthy people carry food poisoning bacteria on their bodies. By touching parts of your body, such as your nose, mouth, hair, or your clothes you can spread bacteria from your hands to the food.

Good personal hygiene also makes good business sense. Customers like to see food handling staff who take hygiene seriously and practice safe food handling.

Put yourself in their place and watch how your workmates handle food. Would you want to eat at, or buy food from, your business?

Wash your hands thoroughly

Washing your hands thoroughly is a good way to reduce the chance of contaminating food with bacteria.

Wash your hands with soap and warm water and don't forget the backs of your hands, wrists, between your fingers and under your fingernails.

Thoroughly dry your hands immediately after you wash them. Always dry your hands with a clean towel, disposable paper towel or under an air dryer, not on a tea towel and never on your clothes.

Wash your hands after:

- going to the toilet
- handling raw food
- blowing your nose
- handling garbage
- touching your ears, nose, mouth or other parts of the body
- smoking
- every break
- handling animals.

If you are wearing disposable gloves change them regularly, in the same way you would wash your hands regularly if not wearing gloves. Wash and dry your hands before putting on gloves.

Illness

You must not work when you are suffering from illnesses which are likely to be transmitted through food. These include gastroenteritis (often called 'gastro'), including viral gastroenteritis (Norovirus), hepatitis A and hepatitis E.

You must advise your supervisor if you are feeling unwell.

You should not return to work if you are suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea. Don't return to work until your symptoms have stopped for 48 hours. If you are unsure, you should contact your doctor for advice.

Food handlers require skills and knowledge

All food handlers need to know how the work they do can affect the safety of the food they handle.

The Australian Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 (*Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*) requires that people who handle food must have the appropriate skills and knowledge for the work they do.

Food handlers need to know:

- how to locate and follow workplace information about their own food handling operations
- how to identify and correct (or report) situations or procedures that do not meet the business's food safety obligations
- who to report food safety issues to within the business; and
- their responsibilities in relation to health and hygiene requirements.

Training

Everyone working in a food premises is encouraged to be trained in safe food handling. **Dofoodsafely**, a free online learning program, is a good place to start - go to <http://dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au>.

More information

A range of resources on safe food handling is available on the Department of Health Food Safety website. Go to www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety or telephone 1300 364 352.

Local councils can also provide advice about personal hygiene and food handler skills and knowledge.

For information on food safety competencies, industry training packages and registered training organisations - go to www.training.gov.au.

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To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 1300 364 352.

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