



West Virginia
Retail Food Safety
COLLABORATIVE

Front Line Food Safety

Food safety resources
for food managers and supervisors
to train food service workers

May 2026

Food Worker Cleanliness

ASK: What causes the most foodborne illness in food establishments?

ANSWER: Employees with dirty or unwashed hands.

ASK: Can food employees use hand sanitizer instead of washing their hands?

ANSWER: No. However, hand sanitizer may be used in addition to hand washing.



ASK: When must food workers wash their hands?

ANSWER:

- 1) Before starting any food preparation,
- 2) Before putting on gloves,
- 3) After using the toilet,
- 4) When switching from working with raw food to working with ready-to-eat food,
- 5) After handling soiled utensils or equipment,
- 6) After touching body parts other than clean hands,
- 7) After touching animals,
- 8) As often as necessary to remove soil and contamination and prevent cross contamination when changing tasks,
- 9) After any activity that contaminates the hands such as using a cell phone, and
- 10) After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or tissue, using tobacco, eating, or drinking.



ASK: For how long should food employees wash their hands?

ANSWER: For at least 20 seconds.

ASK: Without recontaminating one's hands, how can one turn off the faucet on the hand sink or open the restroom door?

ANSWER: Use a clean paper towel.

ASK: What parts of the hands should one pay particular attention to when washing your hands?

ANSWER: Under your finger nails and between your fingers.

ASK: Where should food employees wash their hands?

ANSWER: Only in a handwashing sink. Culinary, warewashing, service, & mop sinks can't be used for hand washing.

ASK: Can a food employee wear fingernail polish or artificial fingernails?

ANSWER: Not unless they are wearing gloves when they are working with exposed food.



ASK: What about long or dirty fingernails?

ANSWER: Fingernails must be kept trimmed and filed. They may not be rough or dirty.

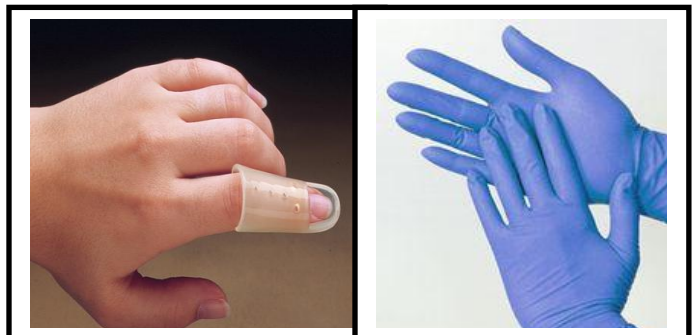
ASK: What about wearing jewelry?

ANSWER: Except for a plain ring such as a wedding band, food employees may not wear jewelry on their arms and hands (including medical ID bracelets) while preparing food.



ASK: What should a food worker do if they have a cut or burn on their hand or finger?

ANSWER: Wear an impermeable bandage or finger cot to cover the wound and then wear a single-use glove over that.



ASK: Are there any rules about the clothes food workers can wear?

ANSWER: Food employees must wear clean outer clothing to prevent contamination of food, equipment, utensils, and linens. Fresh clothing should be worn daily. Aprons should never be worn into a restroom.

ASK: Are hair nets required?

ANSWER: Food employees must wear hats, hair coverings or nets, beard restraints, and clothing that covers body hair so as to keep hair out of food.



ASK: Can food workers eat or drink while preparing or serving food?

ANSWER: A food employee can drink only from a closed beverage container with a straw. They may not eat while preparing or serving food.

ASK: Can food workers use tobacco while preparing or serving food?

ANSWER: No.

ASK: What if a food worker has a runny nose, is persistently sneezing or coughing, or has a discharge from their nose or mouth?

ANSWER: They may not work with exposed food, clean utensils, linens, or equipment, or unwrapped single-use or single-service articles.



ASK: Can a food worker pet a customer's dog or otherwise touch or care for an animal?

ANSWER: No. The only exceptions are for service animals or fish or shellfish in display tanks **IF** the food worker washes their hands after touching them.



CLOSING THOUGHT: Regular Hand Washing Prevents Foodborne Illness

Wash Your Hands!

¡Lávese Las Manos!



1 Wet Hands
Mójese las manos



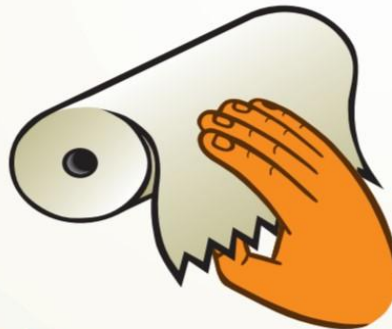
2 Apply Soap
Aplique jabón



3 Scrub for 20 seconds
Frótese las manos por 20 segundos



4 Rinse
Enjuáguese



5 Dry
Séquese las manos



6 Turn Off Water with Paper Towel
Cierre el grifo usando una toalla de papel

Poster developed by:
University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension