

**HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY - COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
701 OCEAN ST., ROOM 312, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060 (831) 454-2022**

**HANDWASHING**

**INTRODUCTION**

Poor personal hygiene is a major contributing factor to food borne illness.

Many bacteria and viruses that cause food borne illnesses can be transferred by people to food. The bacteria and viruses can be carried on a food service 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 PROCEDURE**

Although washing hands seems easy, there is a proper way to wash hands to ensure clean results and keep food safe. Proper hand washing is a barrier against food contamination and is the responsibility of every employee. Follow these simple recommended steps:

- Wet hands and arms with warm water.
- Use an antibacterial soap and lather hands and arms.
- Wash hands and arms thoroughly. A nail brush may be used to clean under the nails and between fingers.
- Wash for about 20 seconds.
- Rinse thoroughly under warm running water.
- Dry hands with a disposable towel or a hot air dryer. **Do not** use cloth towels or aprons.

**WHEN SHOULD HAND WASHING BE DONE?**

Bacteria and viruses can hitchhike on people. Therefore, it is important to wash hands frequently and after any possibility of 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.
- After cleaning or handling garbage.
- Immediately before starting any food preparation and after breaks.
- During food preparation as often as necessary to prevent contamination - especially when working with raw foods and changing tasks.
- If you use plastic gloves, the same rules apply. Remember to wash hands before wearing gloves and wash or change your gloves after breaks; touching raw foods, changing tasks, etc.

**PROPER HANDWASH FACILITIES**

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

- Provide an accessible handwash sink with hot and cold running water. Do not use the sink to prepare or store kitchen items or food.
- Provide soap and towels and a nail brush, and check dispensers on a regular basis. Keep extra supplies on hand.
- Post handwash signs to remind employees to wash hands frequently.
- Train employees in proper handwash techniques. Explain why hand washing is important to food safety. Monitor employees to ensure good personal hygiene practices.

For more information on food protection, please contact the Environmental Health Service, (831) 454-2022