

Proper Hand Washing

May 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



The lack of proper hand washing by food handlers has the potential to contaminate food and cause food-related illnesses. Pathogenic (disease causing) bacteria on hands may be transferred to foods if proper hand washing practices are not followed.

Basic Hand Washing Requirements

A food facility employee is required to wash their hands:

- Immediately before engaging in food preparation, as well as handling clean equipment and utensils.
- Before initially putting on nonlatex gloves to begin food preparation.
- Before dispensing or serving food or handling clean utensils.
- After any activity that may contaminate hands, such as:
 - Visiting the toilet
 - Eating
 - Smoking
 - Sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
 - Handling raw animal products
 - After handling soiled equipment and utensils
 - After touching face, eyes, nose, or hair
 - Emptying the trash
 - Other janitorial tasks



Single Use Nonlatex Gloves

Employees are required to wear single use nonlatex gloves to cover:

- An impermeable cover (bandage) on a cut, burn, or rash.
- False fingernails or un-cleanable fingernails.
- Rings other than a plain ring or wedding band.
- An orthopedic support device, such as a cast, brace, or ace bandage.

A food facility employee is required to change gloves if it is worn out and whenever hand washing is required. Do not wash single use nonlatex gloves. Use single use nonlatex gloves for only one task, and no other purpose. Throw away gloves when damaged, soiled, or when interruptions in the food handling occur.



Ready-to-Eat Foods

Generally, avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food. All food facility employees who work with ready-to-eat food should minimize bare hand contact by using suitable utensils such as tongs, single-use nonlatex gloves, spatulas or dispensing equipment.

For any questions or additional information, you may visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh, contact your local Environmental Health District Office, or call **(888) 700-9995**.

Environmental Health Division

5050 Commerce Drive, Baldwin Park, CA 91706

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh

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