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|  <b>West Lothian Council</b> | <b>Environmental Health</b> |                          | <b>SUBJECT:</b> HAND WASHING AND DISPOSABLE GLOVES |
|   | ✓                           | Food Safety/Food Hygiene | <b>NUMBER:</b> FH09                                |
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|   |                             | Public Health            |  |
| <b>STATUS:</b> TRADE ADVICE   |                             | Pollution Control        |  |
| <b>Data label:</b> Public   |                             | Pest Control/Dog Warden  |  |

## Information Sheet FH09

### Hand Washing and Use of Disposable Gloves by Food Handling Staff

#### Introduction

Thorough hand washing, using warm running water and soap, is essential to producing safe food. If food handlers do not wash their hands at all, or even if they just do not wash them properly, there is every chance that food will become contaminated with harmful bacteria. This has often been found to be the cause of serious food poisoning.

By following some basic personal hygiene rules the risk of food becoming contaminated by dirty hands can be greatly reduced.

#### Contamination of Hands

Hands become contaminated in many different ways, including:

- handling raw foods,
- touching the face, hair or ears,
- after using the toilet,
- eating, smoking,
- putting out rubbish etc.

Hands can then spread this contamination throughout the premises and onto food. The contamination which is picked up on the hands can be controlled by ensuring hands are washed properly. "Hand contact" surfaces such as door handles, taps, containers, utensils etc. should also be cleaned properly and regularly to reduce the levels of contamination on them.

Food handlers must always be aware of what they do, and recognise when hands may have become contaminated.

#### Washing Hands

Food handlers must be provided with facilities to allow them to wash their hands. These will include:

- A wash hand basin in the area where food is being prepared or handled. In bigger kitchens, or where there are large numbers of staff, more than one basin may be needed.
- A hand basin close to the toilets, usually in the intervening ventilated space.

- Every basin must have either: -
- Hot and cold piped water, or
- Warm water supplied through a mixer tap,
- Hot water which, at point of use, is regulated by the addition of cold water to +41°C by means of a thermostatic mixer valve, or
- Warm water through an instant water heater.

We recommend “magic eye” instant water heaters as the best option, especially for busy kitchens. This is operated by a no-touch sensor, making it more economical and more hygienic as there is no hand contact point.

Where a business handles raw and ready to eat foods in the same premises, then the Food Standards Agency in its guidance E. Coli O157 Control of Cross – contamination, asks that hands are washed under running warm water and the tap turned off using paper towel. Online information may be found at:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ecoli-cross-contamination-factsheet.pdf>

- There must be hand soap at all wash hand basins at all times. Anti-bacterial, or bactericidal liquid hand washes are recommended, meeting BS EN 1499. (Soap dispensers must also be kept clean).
- Something clean to dry hands on at all wash hand basins. (NOT ordinary fabric towels – the safest material for hand drying is paper towel roll or single use paper towels). Paper towel can also be used to turn off the tap.
- At the toilet wash hand basin, a nailbrush with soft bristles may be provided; it must be kept in a clean condition. (To keep the brush in a clean condition will involve it being disinfected at the end of each day).

The wash hand basin must be kept in a clean condition and should only be used for washing hands. Tap handles should be kept clean; (to avoid re – contaminating hands after washing, a piece of paper towel can be used to turn the taps off). This is why a no-touch instant water heater is recommended, to avoid this risk of cross contamination. A foot operated pedal bin is preferred as it removes a hand contact point.

Nailbrushes are necessary to remove bacteria that get under fingernails. Staff should use the nailbrush to give hands a thorough wash at the beginning of the day and after they go to the toilet. Normal hand washing should be adequate at all other times.

Thorough hand washing will include cleaning in between fingers, under nails and up the forearms.

Online video showing hand wash practice is available on the Food Standards Agency website and other links.

We recommend displaying a hand wash poster at the kitchen wash hand basin to remind staff on good practice.

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/csposter.pdf>

This is available in the COOKSAFE manual; either purchased from the TSO, or is available free online at

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/cooksafe>

## Using Gloves

Some food handlers wear disposable gloves when preparing food or serving customers. However, there is no evidence that using gloves is safer than handling food with properly washed hands. If gloves require to be used we would recommend using non powdered vinyl gloves, as some people are sensitive to the powder or to the latex in latex gloves.

This does not mean that gloves should not be considered for handling food. It is a general rule that the direct handling of "high risk" foods (that is foods that are ready to eat) should be avoided as much as possible. This can be done by using dedicated tongs, spatulas, greaseproof paper, inverted food bags and gloves. To be used safely, gloves should be changed after use. Gloves can also be useful when food handlers have plasters on to prevent these falling off into food.

Problems mainly occur when gloves are kept on longer than necessary. They will pick up contamination just like hands and spread it about and onto foods, just like hands. They should be disposed of after the job being done is complete. Hands must be washed properly before gloves are put on and after they are taken off. When taken off they should be disposed of and not reused. Gloved hands should not be washed, but gloves removed and hands washed. Perforated or torn gloves should be discarded and hands washed.

### **Further Help**

This is only a basic guide to the important topic of hand washing and personal hygiene. If you need more information, or if you want to discuss any aspect in detail with an officer, then please contact us on 01506 280000 or [environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk)