

Food handler health, hygiene and hand washing

Fact sheet

Everyday, Council's Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) work with residents and local businesses to help make our city what it is today with a long term vision for the future.



A food handler is anyone whose work includes the handling of food or food contact surfaces (utensils and food preparation benches) in a food business.

If you are a food handler such as a cook, a kitchen hand or wait staff, you need to make sure you handle food safely and know what to do if you are sick. If you are a food business owner, you need to provide somewhere for your employees to wash their hands and help them understand their health and hygiene requirements.

Food handlers

Health

If you have food poisoning or food poisoning symptoms, such as vomiting, diarrhoea and fever, or you are diagnosed as a carrier of a food poisoning bacteria or virus you must tell your supervisor. It is important you do not handle food as you could spread food poisoning to customers.

Hygiene

When you are in food handling areas:

- do not eat in the kitchen
- do not sneeze, blow or cough over food or food contact surfaces
- do not spit, smoke or chew tobacco.

When handling food you can demonstrate good hygiene practices and prevent contamination by:

- avoiding unnecessary contact with food, especially ready-to-eat food such as rice paper rolls, salads and cooked meat, and utensils and food preparation benches
- tying hair back – you could use a hair net or cap
- keeping finger nails short and avoid wearing nail polish and fake nails
- covering wounds with bright coloured, waterproof adhesive dressings or bandages so they can be easily seen if they fall into food
- wearing clean clothing
- not wearing loose jewellery, especially on hands and wrists
- limiting mobile phone use – try to not use a mobile phone when handling food and if you do need to use a phone, wash your hands before and after using it
- telling your supervisor if you think you may have contaminated food, for example, if jewellery has fallen into food.

Hand washing

Hand washing helps to prevent food poisoning. You need to wash your hands in the hand wash basin, with soap, warm water and dry with paper towel. Hands need to be washed:

- before starting work
- after handling raw food, such as seafood, uncooked meat and unwashed vegetables
- before handling ready-to-eat food
- after using the toilet
- after taking a break, smoking or eating
- after cleaning tasks such as mopping, handling garbage or waste bins
- after coughing or sneezing
- after touching hair, nose, mouth, ears or any other part of your body.



Wet your hands



Liquid soap



Lather and scrub
(20 sec)



Rinse
(10 sec)



Dry your hands

Food business owners

You need to ensure people on the premises and food handlers do not contaminate food by:

- telling your employees about their health and hygiene requirements and supervise them to ensure they are following your instructions
- ensuring employees do not handle food when they are sick with food poisoning or food poisoning symptoms. If an employee has been diagnosed with food poisoning you need to ensure they do not handle food until they have a medical clearance
- restricting people who are not food handlers from food handling areas.

You need to provide a hand wash basin for employees to use that is:

- large enough to allow hands, wrists and arms to be washed under the tap
- separate from food preparation sinks and cleaning sinks
- easily accessible and not blocked by food, containers, benches or equipment
- located close to food handling areas
- provided with:
 - warm running water
 - liquid hand soap
 - single use paper towels.

It is a good idea to have a rubbish bin nearby to throw away the used paper towels.

Further information

For further information on Food Safety visit: <https://www.coorong.sa.gov.au/council-services/environmental-and-public-health/food-safety>

Email: council@coorong.sa.gov.au