

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

## Information Sheet FH09

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

#### Introduction

Thorough hand washing, using warm 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 properly washed. "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.

- Every basin must have either: -
- Hot and cold piped water, or
- Warm water supplied through a mixer tap, or
- Warm water through an instant water heater

We recommend instant water heaters as the best option, especially for busy kitchens. The best type of instant water we have found so far is the **Redring Autosensor model AV3**. This is operated by a no-touch sensor, making it more economical and more hygienic. This is available from Holland House on 01506-438885, and from Ross Electrical on 01506-416340.

- Where the hot water is too hot for hand washing then the basin should be filled with a mixture of hot and cold. (Ensure a stopper is provided at all wash hand basins).
- There must be soap at all wash hand basins at all times. Anti-bacterial, or bactericidal liquid hand washes are recommended. (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).
- A nailbrush with soft bristles that is 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.

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.

## Using Gloves

Some food handlers are starting to 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.

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 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.

## 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 282500 or [environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk)