



Food Safety Project  
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

# SafeFood<sup>©</sup> Times

**News from the Iowa State University Food Safety Project**  
**This is the second of three issues of the SafeFood<sup>©</sup> Times.**  
**Please share this newsletter with your employees and post in a visible location.**

## Handwashing: The first line of defense against microorganisms

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Foodservice managers and employees are responsible for ensuring the safety of food prepared and served to their customers.

Handwashing is important to prevent cross contamination and ensure the safety of food.

Why is handwashing so important? Hands are a vehicle for the transmission of viruses and bacteria. Through proper handwashing, direct contamination and cross contamination can be prevented and this will minimize risk of foodborne illness.

Effective handwashing means hands are washed at appropriate times and the procedure described in *Food Code* is followed.

### *When to wash hands?*

*Before...*

- Engaging in food preparation and service
- Handling clean and sanitized equipment and utensils
- Putting on gloves.
- Eating

*After...*

- Engaging in activities that contaminate hands

- Using the toilet
- Taking out garbage
- Handling soiled dish-ware
- Handling raw food
- Touching bare parts of body, other than cleaned hands
- Coughing or sneezing
- Using a handkerchief or disposable tissue
- Eating
- Ending a task
- Petting animals
- Handling chemicals

Hands should be washed during food preparation as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination.

### *How to wash hands?*

*Food Code* specifies a 3-step procedure for handwashing: washing/lathering, rinsing, and drying. This recommendation is:

- use warm water, soap, lather 10 - 15 seconds
- rinse
- dry using a disposable towel or heated forced air.

Use the disposable towel to turn off the faucets and open doors—this prevents recon-

tamination of clean hands.

After hands are clean follow these steps to keep them clean and prevent **recontamination** of hands.

### *Where to wash hands?*

Employees should wash their hands in a designated handwashing sink. A handwashing sink should be located in food preparation, food service, and dish washing areas. Sinks should be accessible to employees at all times and used only for handwashing. Each handwashing sink should have warm water, a filled soap dispenser, and individual disposable towels or a heated-air hand dryer.

It is important for operations to have properly equipped handwashing sinks with the necessary supplies so employees can wash their hands.

Remember, “handwashing is the single most important way to prevent cross contamination and foodborne illnesses” CDC.

### Articles

- Importance of handwashing
- Handwashing data for your operation
- Next visit by project team
- Online handwashing resources

### Questions:

If you have questions contact:

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# Handwashing Benchmarks



**Definition: Benchmarking is a process that establishes industry best practices or provides standards to use as a reference point for comparison with actual performance.**

Based on observations of employee handwashing in assisted living, childcare, restaurants, and schools, handwashing benchmarks are proposed as a reference point. Observations of employees making an effort to wash their hands was compared to recommendations of the *Food Code* on when handwashing should occur. The proposed benchmarks are high for some operations and might not seem achievable.

We know it is hard to imagine that restaurant employees, with their busy jobs, will wash hands 32 times per hour while serving. This is why it so important to think about better ways to organize work tasks to minimize the contamination of hands to reduce the number of times hands should be washed. The proposed benchmarks of number of times hands should be washed by employees each hour during production, service, and cleaning phases of operation are shown in table 1.

**Table 1.** Observed handwashing frequencies of foodservice employees during production, service, and cleaning and proposed benchmarks

Type of Operation	Did Wash Hands			Handwashing Benchmarks		
	Production	Service	Cleaning	Production	Service	Cleaning
Assisted Living	3	2	3	7	7	7
Childcare	3	3	3	9	9	10
Restaurants	2	1	2	28	32	23
Schools	3	1	4	11	12	8

## The Question of Gloves: Fact or Fib

Here are some facts about the use of gloves that you might find interesting.

*Disposable gloves are not needed when handling ready-to-eat foods.*

**Fib.** Gloves replace bare hand contact in foodservice and provide a barrier between food and what may be present on hands. When should gloves be changed? Whenever hands should be washed.

*It's not necessary to wash hands before putting on gloves.*

**Fib.** Hands should always be washed before putting on clean gloves. Clean hands handling clean gloves reduces con-

tamination. Always discard gloves at the end of a task or when they become contaminated.

*Proper glove use, along with suitable utensils and handwashing, are important for safe food handling.*

**Fact.** Gloves and utensils eliminate hand contact with food.



**Gloves used carelessly can be risky business. Used properly, they provide protection for food and customers.**

## Coming Soon – A call (or e-mail) from me!

The food safety project team will start the last round of visits to our participating locations in March and finish them by early May. I will be contacting each location in midFebruary to set up this final visit.

Remember it is important that you have the following project specified menu items served the day of the site visit: **Cold deli meat** and a **raw green leafy vegetable** (such as lettuce, broccoli, or celery).

Thank you for all your efforts to make this project a success.

Janell Meyer, Project Coordinator

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## Web Sites

These are some web sites where you can find more information on handwashing.

<http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/fsgret.html>, Gateway to Government Food Safety Information

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

<http://www.handwashingforlife.com/us/english/>, Handwashing for Life

Glogerm: <http://www.glogerm.com>

Glitterbug: <http://www.glitterbug.com>

