

BARE HAND CONTACT WITH READY-TO-EAT FOODS

The Food Service Sanitation Rules & Regulations state that food employees cannot handle ready-to-eat foods with their bare hands. Ready-to-eat foods are foods that will be consumed without additional washing, cooking or preparation.

What are some examples of ready-to-eat foods?

- fresh fruits and vegetables served raw
- bread, toast, rolls and baked goods
- garnishes for plates and drinks (lettuce, parsley, lemon wedges, etc.)
- salads and salad ingredients
- cold meats and sandwiches

The main reason for not touching ready-to-eat foods with bare hands is to prevent viruses and bacteria which are present on your hands from contaminating the food. Improper food handling is one of the most common causes of foodborne illnesses. With proper knowledge, food employees can prevent the transfer of viruses and bacteria from hands to the customer's food.

How can I prepare or serve ready-to-eat food without contact with my bare hands?

You may use any of the following to prepare or serve foods without bare hand contact:

- tongs
- forks and spoons
- deli paper
- spatulas
- disposable gloves
- waxed paper
- napkins

What can I do with a ready-to-eat food item if it was touched with bare hands?

You can either heat the food thoroughly to the temperature required for cooking or reheating, or discard the food.

Am I required to wear disposable single-use gloves?

The only time you are required to wear a single-use glove is if you have any cuts, scrapes, or burns on your hand. You may also choose to wear single-use gloves to avoid bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods.

When am I required to wash my hands?

- before starting work
- before putting on or changing single-use gloves or using any barrier to contact food
- after touching your hair, face, or clothing
- after touching raw, fresh, or frozen beef, poultry, fish or meat
- after mopping, sweeping, removing garbage or using the telephone
- after using the bathroom
- after smoking, eating, drinking, sneezing or coughing
- after touching anything that might result in contamination of hands

How do I wash my hands properly?

All employees involved in food preparation must wash their hands and exposed portions of their arms with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use a single-use paper towel or hot air dryer to dry hands. Sanitizer is not a substitute for proper hand washing.

