

Checklist: Basic Food Safety Practices That Might Get Overlooked

As a food handler, it can be easy to forget some of the basic practices that help protect customers from pathogens and prevent food contamination. No matter whether you're a buser, server, host, or cook—if you handle food at your place of work in any way, you risk transferring pathogens over to your customers.

Keep in mind these fundamental practices for when to wash your hands and preventing cross-contamination when handling food.



When to Wash Your Hands

It is easy to contaminate your hands while doing everyday activities, and contaminated hands can spread pathogens. To keep food safe, wash your hands before you start work and after any of these activities:

- Using the restroom
- Touching your hair, face, or body
- Handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood (before and after)
- Touching clothing or aprons
- Taking out garbage
- Sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
- Handling chemicals that can make food unsafe
- Clearing tables or busing dirty dishes
- Handling money
- Before putting on gloves at the start of a new task
- Handling service animals
- Smoking
- Eating or drinking
- Chewing gum or tobacco
- Leaving and returning to the kitchen/prep area
- Touching anything else that may contaminate your hands. Examples include dirty equipment, work surfaces, and cloths

Preventing Cross-contamination

Surfaces that touch food are called food-contact surfaces. Many of the utensils and equipment you use have food-contact surfaces. Plates, glasses, forks, and tongs are examples. You can contaminate these surfaces if you are not careful when handling them.



Follow these cross-contamination prevention practices to avoid contamination when serving food:

Handling Dishes

- Do NOT touch the parts of dishes or glassware that come in contact with food
- Hold dishes by the bottom or edge
- Hold glasses by the middle, bottom, or stem

Handling Glasses

- Do NOT stack glasses when carrying them
- Carry glasses in a rack or tray

Handling Utensils

- Do NOT hold utensils by the parts that come in contact with food
- Hold utensils by the handle

Handling Ready-to-Eat Food

- Do NOT use bare hands to handle ready-to-eat food
- Use tongs, deli sheets, or gloves

Handling Ice

- NEVER scoop ice with your bare hands or a glass
- Use ice scoops or tongs to get ice

Handling Towels

- NEVER store towels in your apron or uniform pocket
- Store towels for cleaning food spills in a sanitizer solution when you are not using them
- NEVER use towels that you use for cleaning food spills for any other purpose

Handling Serving Utensils

- NEVER use the same utensils when handling:
 - Ready-to-eat food and raw meat, poultry, or seafood
 - Different food items
- Use separate utensils when serving different food items
- Store serving utensils in food with the handles extended above the rims of their containers