

Cleaning effectively in your business

Guidance on how to clean equipment and surfaces to prevent harmful bacteria from spreading onto food.

Steps for cleaning effectively

By cleaning with warm, soapy water or by using disinfectant cleaning products you lower the chances of people getting ill. You should regularly clean your:

- hands
- work surfaces and chopping boards
- utensils, dishes, and all cooking equipment
- dish cloths, sponges, and tea towels/chef's towel
- touch areas such as door handles, bins, light switches, and electronic devices

You should do the following things:

- clean and disinfect food areas and equipment between different tasks, especially after handling raw food
- clean as you go - if you spill some food, clear it up straight away and clean the surface thoroughly
- use cleaning and disinfection products that are suitable for the job and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- disinfection products should meet the BS EN standards - check product labels for either [BS EN 1276](#) or [BS EN 13697](#) codes
- do not let food waste build up - dispose of food waste suitably
- use a cleaning schedule to make sure that surfaces and equipment are cleaned when they need to be - it can also help to stop cleaning products being wasted or used incorrectly

Not cleaning thoroughly is one of the most common reasons why food businesses are prosecuted.

Cleaning schedule

Work out what needs cleaning or disinfecting every day, or more than once a day, and what needs cleaning less frequently. Your schedule should show:

- what needs to be cleaned
- what needs to be disinfected
- how often it needs to be done
- how the cleaning/disinfecting should be done

It is a good idea to include cleaning instructions showing:

- cleaning procedures
- what cleaning products should be used
- how the products should be used, including how much they should be diluted and how long they should be left in contact with the surface, following the manufacturer's instructions
- how the products should be stored - in a special place, not in food areas

You can find more information on [cleaning in our Safer food, better business for caterers pack](#).

Disinfecting products

Any chemicals used in food establishments to clean and disinfect food contact surfaces and equipment must be suitable for food contact surfaces. You are advised to follow the manufacturer's preparation and cleaning instructions. You should pay particular attention to contact times, ensuring there is no chemical contamination or taint risk to any food and rinsing has been carried out effectively (if required).

Detergents

Detergents clean the surface and remove grease, but they do not kill bacteria and viruses.

Disinfectants

Disinfectants kill bacteria and viruses and should be used on a visibly clean surface. They do not work effectively if the surface is covered in grease or visible dirt. It is also important that you leave the product on the surface for the time specified on the instructions.

Sanitisers

Sanitisers can be used to both clean and disinfect as part of a two-stage approach. First use the sanitiser to clean the surface, removing any dirt, food, and grease.

Re-apply to the visibly clean surface and leave for the required time to disinfect the surface.

If disinfecting products are not available

If the cleaning and disinfecting products you routinely use are not available, you should seek suitable alternatives with equivalent and effective properties.

Both alcohol-based sanitisers/surface disinfectants (in concentrations of 70-80%) and common disinfectants based on ammonium compounds or chlorine (bleach), can be effective. They can be applied either as a combined detergent-disinfectant solution or when adopting a two-stage approach as a disinfectant following cleaning with a detergent. In either case, food contact surfaces should be washed down with water to prevent chemical contamination of food.

You must ensure:

- the manufacturer's instructions on use are followed, including using appropriate dilution rates and contact times
- the health and safety of staff is considered, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides [guidance on the use of chemicals in the workplace](#); and
- the suitability of the chemicals for the surfaces to be cleaned and disinfected

Further advice should be sought from your food safety consultant if required.

If alternative disinfectant products are not available, food businesses may wish to consider using heat as a Critical Control Point. Kitchen items such as knives and utensils can be put into a dishwasher, rated for disinfection, or submerged into boiling water. Surfaces can also be steam cleaned.

Food safety coaching video – Cleaning effectively

How to clean work surfaces using a two-stage process.

Remember: When you start a new food business or take over an existing business, you must [register with your local authority](#).