

Personal hygiene

Guidance on what you and your staff must do when handling food.

To keep food safe, every person working in a food-handling area must maintain a high level of personal hygiene.

They must wear clothing that is:

- suitable
- clean
- protective

When preparing or handling food they should:

- keep hair tied back and wear a suitable head covering, e.g. hat or hair net
- not wear watches or jewellery (except a wedding band)
- not touch their face and hair, smoke, spit, sneeze, eat or chew gum

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

Handwashing

Effective handwashing is extremely important to help prevent harmful bacteria from spreading from peoples' hands. All staff that work with food must wash their hands:

- when in the kitchen or preparation area
- before preparing food
- after touching raw food
- after handling food waste or emptying a bin
- after cleaning
- after blowing their nose
- after touching phones, light switches, door handles and cash registers

Staff should dry their hands on a disposable towel. This is because harmful bacteria can spread on wet or damp hands. Use a disposable towel to turn off the tap.

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

Food safety coaching videos – Handwashing

How to wash your hands to stop bacteria from spreading.

Fitness for work

You must not allow anyone to handle food or enter a food handling area if they:

- are suffering from or carrying a disease likely to be transmitted through food

- have infected wounds, skin infections or sores
- have diarrhoea

If any of these apply to a member of staff, they must tell their manager about it immediately.

Staff with diarrhoea or vomiting should not return to work until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours.

The guidance below applies to all UK food business operators other than primary producers, such as farmers and growers.

PDF

[View Fitness for work guidance as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (125.32 KB)

Food safety coaching videos – Staff illness

What to do if a member of staff is ill at work and how long they should stay at home.

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