

Why is cleaning important

Cleaning removes harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites which may be present on food in food preparation areas.

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

- hands
- work surfaces and Chopping boards
- dish cloths, sponges, and tea towels
- utensils, dishes, and containers

Hand washing

Wash your hands with soap and warm water before preparing, cooking, or eating food. [Tips for washing hands](#) can be found on the NHS Page.

Important points at which to wash your hands are:

- before preparing ready to eat food (like salad and fruit)
- after handling raw food (like meat and fish)

If possible, prepare all raw meat, fish, and poultry as a single task and wash hands immediately after.

You can use cold water to wash your hands, as this will still clean them, however, using warm water is better. This is because the soap/detergent lathers up more, which makes it more effective at removing bacteria.

If you're in a situation where it's not possible to wash your hands, [for example at a picnic](#), you can use hand sanitising wipes or gels to disinfect them before handling food. Using hand sanitiser kills pathogens on your hands.??

Cleaning kitchen items

Worksurfaces and chopping boards

Make sure any surfaces you are using for food preparation are clean and clear.

Thoroughly wash chopping boards soon after preparing raw foods. Also wash your hands after cleaning chopping boards.

Where possible use a separate chopping board for raw and cooked food. If this is not possible prepare veg first and raw meat, fish and poultry last, washing with soap after use.

Ideally avoid sink clutter by washing up items as you go or using your dishwasher to stack items as you are finished with them - but make sure your chopping board is safe to go in the dishwasher.

Dish cloths, sponges, and tea towels

We advise that you wash or change dish cloths, tea towels, sponges and oven gloves regularly. It's important to wash and dry them before you use them again. This is because dirty and damp items encourage bacteria to grow. Also use different cloths for specific tasks, so use a separate cloth for surfaces and for washing up.

Utensils, dishes, and containers

Take care to keep all utensils and dishes clean before preparing food. This is to avoid [cross-contamination](#). Also, remember to wash items thoroughly between tasks to avoid the spread of harmful bacteria.

You should use different utensils, plates and chopping boards when preparing ready-to-eat foods and raw foods that require cooking.

When it comes to plastic or reuseable drinks containers, we advise that they're cleaned daily if possible.

Cleaning and Food

Raw meat, fish, and poultry

You should not wash raw meat, fish, and poultry. Washing meat, fish and poultry under a tap can splash bacteria onto your hands, clothes, utensils and worktops. See our [cross-contamination](#) pages for further information.

Always wash your hands after handling raw meat, fish and poultry.

Fruit and vegetables

Wash fruit and vegetables with water before you eat them to make sure that they are clean. You should wash them under a running tap, or in a bowl of fresh water, making sure to rub their skin under the water.

We advise that you start with the least soiled items first and give each of them a final rinse. Peeling vegetables can also remove more bacteria, so this is an additional step you can take before eating root vegetables raw.

Cleaning products

A wide range of products are available for cleaning and disinfection. You should read the manufacturer's instructions carefully to ensure that the product is suitable for food surfaces and that you are using it correctly. Always store away cleaning and disinfection products safely and securely.

To kill any harmful bacteria, you should make sure to:

- clear any surfaces of debris before starting cleaning
- ensure that the product is suitable for food surfaces and that you are using it correctly

Cleaning products will be classed as detergents, disinfectants or sanitisers.

Detergents

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

Disinfectants

Disinfectants kill bacteria and viruses. They 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 important that you follow the specified contact times for the products to be effective.

Sanitisers

Sanitisers kill bacteria but may not kill viruses. They can be used to clean and disinfect as part of a two-stage approach:

1. use the sanitiser to clean the surface. This will remove any dirt, food and grease.
2. re-apply the sanitiser to the visibly clean surface and leave for the required time. This will disinfect the surface.

Hand sanitisers and wipes

If you are on the go and unable to use soap and water to wash your hands, then you could use hand sanitisers or wipes if you have them. Most hand sanitisers and wipes kill bacteria on your hands but may not kill viruses.