

# Guidelines For Proper Glove Use in Food Establishments: “No Bare Hands”

Contamination of food by the hands of food handlers is an important cause of foodborne illness outbreaks. For this reason, many food establishment operators (and health departments) have encouraged or required kitchen staff to wear gloves while handling food. There currently are no requirements for glove use in food service establishments, but, a “no bare hands” policy is recommended for handling ready-to-eat foods (e.g. sandwiches, salads). Gloves and utensils (such as tongs) can be used to minimize bare hand contact of food. If gloves are used incorrectly, however, the risk of contamination by a gloved hand is the same as for a bare hand. If the type of glove is appropriate, proper handwashing is practiced, and the gloves are changed frequently, gloves can provide an effective barrier between the hands of food handlers and the foods they handle.

The following guidelines are recommended for glove use in food service establishments:

## Type of Gloves

1. Avoid the use of latex gloves in food establishments:
  - ◆ Food handlers may develop latex allergies through prolonged use of latex gloves (approximately 10% of the population is thought to be susceptible to such allergies).
  - ◆ Trace amounts of latex from gloves may be introduced into food, which in rare circumstances, may cause an allergic reaction in consumers sensitized to latex.
  - ◆ The following materials are suitable alternatives to latex:
    - ◆ polyvinyl
    - ◆ nitrile
    - ◆ chloroprene
    - ◆ Polyethylene
2. Make gloves of different sizes available, to ensure proper fit and comfort.
3. Use high-quality durable gloves to minimize leaking and tearing.



## Proper Use of Gloves

1. Hands must be washed and dried thoroughly:
  - ◆ Before wearing gloves
  - ◆ When changing to a new pair of gloves
  - ◆ After removing the gloves
2. A new pair of gloves must be worn:
  - ◆ When changing tasks (e.g. when moving to a new work station, after handling raw meats, before handling ready-to-eat foods such as sandwiches, after cleaning duties, etc.).
  - ◆ After covering mouth during sneezing or coughing, blowing nose, or touching hair (again, hands must be washed after gloves have been removed).
  - ◆ As frequently as possible. A pair of gloves should not be worn for more than 4 hours. Prolonged use of a single pair of gloves can result in excess perspiration on hands, which provides ideal conditions for bacterial growth on the skin. Gloves are also more likely to leak or tear if worn for extended periods.
3. Disposable gloves should only be used once.
4. Durable re-usable gloves must be washed and sanitized between tasks and stored carefully after removal to prevent contamination.
5. Gloves should always be worn by employees:
  - ◆ Who have cuts, sores or rashes on hands
  - ◆ Who wear orthopedic support devices on the hands that cannot be adequately cleaned, such as casts and braces
  - ◆ Who wear artificial nails or fingernail polish



**For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.**

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4EPHF-10-028  
Created: Feb/04  
Revised: May/08  
Updated: Oct/10