

Preventing Contamination by Hands

“Protecting the consumer by not handling food that is ready to eat with bare hands.”

Food Code References:

18 AAC 31.220

Definitions:

Foodborne Illness

Often called "food poisoning"; an illness caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria, parasites or viruses, also known as microbes or pathogens.

Handwashing

The vigorous rubbing together of all surfaces of lathered hands, followed by rinsing under warm water.

No Bare Hand Contact

Preventing any portion of the hands or arms from coming into contact with exposed food that is ready-to-eat.

Ready-To-Eat Food

Foods that are eaten without additional cooking or washing to remove germs.

They include:

- Any food not cooked after final preparation, such as sushi or sandwiches
- Washed produce that is eaten raw, such as fruits and salads
- Bakery or bread items, such as toast or rolls
- Cooked food, such as pizza and hamburgers
- Garnishes, like parsley, lemon wedges, or pickles on plates
- Fruits or vegetables for mixed drinks or smoothies
- Ice

Statistics show that improper food handling by a food employee is one of the most common causes of **FOODBORNE ILLNESS**. A food employee with **POOR HANDWASHING** practices can transfer viruses and germs from their hands directly to the food the customer eats.

The Alaska Food Code states “food that is exposed and in a **READY-TO-EAT** form is prepared with **NO BARE HAND CONTACT** by the proper use of utensils, except when washing fruits and vegetables.”

Preventing contamination by prohibiting bare hand contact helps to eliminate possibility of a food employee transferring viruses and germs to foods with their hands and causing a **FOODBORNE ILLNESS**.

READY-TO-EAT FOOD

A **READY TO EAT** food is a food that can be eaten without washing, cooking, or additional preparation by the food employee.

Examples of **READY-TO-EAT** food include:

- Sandwiches
- Salads
- Rolls and muffins

NO BARE HAND CONTACT

Utensils to handle **READY-TO-EAT** foods include:

- Deli paper
- Tongs
- Spatula
- Single-use gloves
- Chopsticks
- Toothpicks
- Scoops
- Ladles
- Other utensils

HANDWASHING

Use of utensils, such as gloves, or the use of hand sanitizers is not a substitute for proper **HANDWASHING**. Always use warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds to make sure you are practicing good **HANDWASHING**.

USE OF SINGLE-USE GLOVES

Many employees wear gloves too much and do not change them often enough. In general, if performing the same task for an extended period of time change gloves frequently. Remember that gloves are not an extension of your hand. If the gloves become soiled, they can pass contamination just as easy as unclean hands. Be sure to wash hands before and after using gloves.

