Preventing Contamination by Hands

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

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.