

Information for Food Handlers

INSA has published a compilation of basic rules of good hygiene practices.

The Dr Ricardo Jorge National Institute of Health (INSA), through its Food and Nutrition Department, has compiled some basic rules of Good Hygiene Practices for food handlers.

The prevention of food and/or surface contamination depends, among other factors, on the conditions of the preparation, confection and distribution facilities, the training of food handlers in the area of hygiene and food safety and compliance with Good Hygiene Practices, which correspond to a set of behaviours and attitudes essential to ensure food safety and, in these times, to prevent the transmission of Covid-19.



The Good Hygiene Practices should include compliance with basic rules in line with the following requirements:

Personal hygiene

- Careful personal hygiene;
- Short, clean, varnish-free fingernails;
- Personal clothing and adornments (rings, bracelets, earrings, and piercings) as well as other objects used outside the workplace, kept in a different closet / locker than the one used to store the work clothes.

Uniform / Work clothing

- It must be clean and in good condition;
- It must be appropriate and used exclusively within the workplace;
- It must include hair protection (e.g. hairnet, cap);
- Body protection;
- Non-slip, closed, comfortable and washable shoes;
- Apron or protective clothing, which should be removed/changed after contact with raw materials or partially prepared foods, whenever waste is disposed of and before handling the final product;
- Gloves and mask (whenever necessary);
- Exclusive wardrobe/cabinet to store your work clothes.

Attitude and behaviour

Some microorganisms are present and develop in various parts of the body, such as the hair, nose, mouth, intestines, skin and hands. Hands often promote cross contamination by transferring micro-organisms from raw to cooked food, or from dirty/contaminated surfaces to clean surfaces.

To avoid these types of contamination through hand contact, food handlers should:

- Keep their hands clean, without scratches or cuts, so as not to facilitate the establishment and development of micro-organisms;

- Organise tasks from the dirtiest to the cleanest area so that there is no cross-contact between food, utensils and equipment from different stages of the "moving forwards" process;
- Respect, in terms of space and/or time, the separate areas for preparation/manipulation of raw products and finished products ready for consumption.

When to wash your hands

Wash your hands often during the day with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, according to the recommendations of the Directorate-General for Health, and always:

- When you arrive and when you leave the workplace;
- Before putting on and after taking off your uniform/work clothes;
- Before putting on gloves and after taking them off;
- Before putting on a protective mask/visor and after taking it off;
- Before, during and at the end of any simple cooking, cleaning or disinfection task;
- After using the toilet facilities;
- After handling waste bags or bins;
- After handling equipment and utensils that have been used;
- After handling raw food;
- After cleaning, disinfecting or handling chemicals;
- After eating or smoking;
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose;
- When touching hair, nose, mouth, eyes, ears or other body parts;
- After touching objects such as money, phone/mobile, cash register;
- Before and after serving food or providing care, such as feeding those belonging to the groups most vulnerable to COVID-19.

When is the use of disposable gloves recommended?

Glove hygiene is only guaranteed with hand hygiene, so hands should be washed properly before putting on gloves. The gloves should always be worn:

- Once only, for the performance of a single task and changed when dirty, torn or if you have perspired;
- For protection from wounds, cuts and burns;
- In ready-to-eat food handling tasks;
- Never blow into gloves, wash them with soap and water or reuse gloves.
- After finishing the task, remove and dispose of the gloves into normal waste and wash your hands correctly with water and soap, according to the DGS recommendations.

Personal behaviour

- Promote the correct and proper use of face masks;
- Dry hands with disposable paper towels;
- Clean counter tops, equipment and utensils with industrial paper;
- Do not use cloths for drying dishes and utensils;
- Do not use aprons/working clothes to clean or dry hands;
- Do not taste food with your hand;
- Use appropriate utensils to handle food and do not use hands;

- Do not carry dishes against work clothes and/or aprons;
- Comply with the rules of respiratory etiquette recommended by the DGS;
- Do not bite your nails;
- Avoid touching eyes, hair, mouth, nose and ears with your hands. If it happens, wash your hands immediately;
- Do not touch the inside of dishes with your fingers;
- Do not pick up glasses, bowls or cups by the edges, or put your fingers inside them;
- Always hold cutlery by the handle and do not talk while handling the dishes and clean cutlery;
- Do not talk when you are close to ready-to-eat foods that are not protected from environmental contamination;
- Schedule and organize tasks in advance;
- Comply with established basic hygiene rules.

Informal translation into English by Safe Communities Portugal

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