

## Guidelines on Good Hygiene Practices by Service Staff at Food Establishments

A public health document prepared by:  
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### INTRODUCTION

All persons, including service staff (e.g. waiters, waitresses) working in food retail establishments should practise good personal and food hygiene to ensure that food served to patrons are safe for consumption.

The food handling and personal hygiene practices of service staff may also influence patrons' decisions on re-visiting the food retail establishment. The following guidelines inform food retail establishment operators and service staff of the good hygiene practices that should be adopted when serving food to patrons.

### GUIDELINES

#### 1) Health Status of Service Staff

Operators of food retail establishments should ensure that all service staff are free from any symptoms of illnesses. Service staff who are ill could contaminate the food served and spread diseases to patrons through their contact with the food, e.g. coughing or sneezing onto cooked or ready-to-eat food, touching cooked / ready-to-eat food with bare hands and not washing their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

- a) Service staff should inform their supervisors if they are feeling unwell. Supervisors should advise staff who are feeling unwell to see a doctor immediately.
- b) Supervisors should only allow service staff to come into contact with cooked / ready-to-eat food and serving utensils 48 hours after the cessation of illness.
- c) Service staff should cover their cuts and sores completely with brightly coloured waterproof dressing.

## 2) Personal Hygiene

Operators of food retail establishments should ensure that all service staff put on clean clothes and follow good personal hygiene practices to prevent the contamination of food. Some good personal hygiene practices that service staff should adopt include the following:

- a) Wear clean, proper and tidy attire when at work. The attire should be changed on a daily basis, or when they are soiled.
- b) Keep fingernails short and clean and not put on nail polish or fake fingernails. Bacteria harboured under fingernails can get into food when fingernails come into contact with food. Bacteria will multiply and contaminate the food.
- c) Do not wear accessories or jewellery as they may drop into the food. Such articles could also trap food debris that can contaminate the food.
- d) Keep hair and beard neat and tidy. Long hair should be tied up using hair restraints such as caps.
- e) Effective hand washing is important to help prevent harmful bacteria from spreading from hands or arms to food, work surfaces, utensils, equipment, etc. Hands and exposed portions of arms must be washed thoroughly with soap and water before starting work and especially:
  - i. After visiting the toilet
  - ii. After having a break
  - iii. After handling money
  - iv. Before and after serving food
  - v. After coughing, sneezing, eating or drinking
  - vi. After handling rubbish
  - vii. After cleaning works e.g. clearing plates, wiping tables and clearing food mess
- f) Operators of food retail establishments are to ensure that there is dedicated non- hand operated hand-washing sinks for service staff to carry out the following proper hand washing steps:



- i. Wet hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Rub palms together to make lather.
  - ii. Scrub in between the fingers
  - iii. Scrub the back of your hands
  - iv. Scrub your thumbs
  - v. Scrub your palms
  - vi. Scrub your nails and fingertips
  - vii. Scrub your wrists
  - viii. Rinse and dry your hands with paper towel
- g) Hand sanitizers should be provided within the refreshment area for service staff to disinfect their hands regularly. Soiled hands, however, would need to be cleaned with soap and water before the use of hand sanitizer.
- h) To prevent the contamination of food or food-contact surfaces, staff should not do any of the following when handling or serving food:
- i. Smoke
  - ii. Spit
  - iii. Pick nose
  - iv. Clean ears with fingers
  - v. Blow or breathe on glassware or cutlery to polish them
  - vi. Wipe hands on a dirty cloth
  - vii. Comb or touch hair
  - viii. Wipe off perspiration with bare hands

### **3) Food Handling and Serving Practices**

Operators of food retail establishments should ensure that all service staff are aware of and follow proper food handling and serving practices to prevent contamination of food. The service staff should:

- a) Turn away from food and cover their noses and mouths with tissue paper or handkerchiefs when sneezing or coughing. Wash hands thoroughly after sneezing or coughing.
- b) Do not touch cooked / ready-to-serve food with bare hands when serving food. Care should be taken to ensure that thumbs or fingers are not in contact with the food.
- c) Always use tongs, ladles or spoons to handle cooked / ready-to-eat food or cut fruits. When necessary, wear disposable gloves. Discard the gloves after each use.
- d) Handle crockery and utensils by the base, handle or areas that are not in contact with food. Ensure that crockery and utensils are not dirty, chipped, broken or cracked.
- e) Do not touch the inside and rim of cups or glasses. Use a food tray when serving drinks.
- f) Do not use bare hands to handle or place ice into glasses. Always use tongs, scoops or other ice dispensing utensils or equipment to handle ice.
- g) Always provide serving spoons to patrons who are sharing dishes.
- h) Do not serve cooked / ready-to-eat food which has dropped on the floor or been exposed to contaminants e.g. cleaning chemicals, pests.
- i) Keep the dining environment clean and do not sweep crumbs or remnants onto the floor. Tables should be wiped with clean cloth and sanitizer.