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Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca/

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

www.inspection.gc.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/

Department of Health and Community Services

www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/

For more information, please contact your Food Safety Specialist or Food Safety & Quality Coordinator (Livestock).

Other information pamphlets are available online from the Department of Natural Resources at:

www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/

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Employee Hygiene Practices



The Importance of Employee Hygiene

Foodborne illness occurs when a person consumes food contaminated with pathogenic bacteria, moulds, viruses, parasites or toxins. According to Health Canada, about 10,000 cases of foodborne illnesses are reported each year in Canada. However, food safety experts believe that an estimated two million people become ill without knowing or reporting it. Many cases of foodborne illness go unreported because their symptoms often resemble the flu.

Employees are potential sources of harmful microorganisms and if good hygiene practices are not followed, infection can be transmitted to the consumer. To prevent the occurrence of foodborne illness and other food safety hazards, employees should perform good personal hygiene practices and be provided with adequate training on a continuous basis. Provided below are some recommended practices that should be followed by employees working in a food processing establishment.

Employee Health and Injuries

Employees who are ill should not come into contact with food or clean equipment and utensils in the processing and preparation area. The employee should stay at home or notify their employer immediately. Symptoms such as a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or sore throat could indicate that an employee may have a contagious disease. Open cuts, wounds, or sores on the hands and arms can become infected. They should be completely covered with a tight-fitting, waterproof bandage enclosed in clean, sanitary, single-use gloves.

Personal Cleanliness

Employees should maintain good personal hygiene through personal cleanliness. This can be accomplished by: showering or bathing everyday before they come to work; examining their body for cuts or sores; wearing clean, laundered clothes after bathing and before going to work; keeping their beard shaved or trimmed; keeping their hair groomed or having long hair restrained in a ponytail or braid; and keeping their fingernails trimmed and clean.

Work Clothing

Harmful microorganisms can be carried on outer garments. Employees must wear clean outer garments, such as uniforms or aprons, when preparing food or washing and sanitizing equipment and utensils. These garments must only be worn at the establishment and cleaned when appropriate. Any garments that become soiled or dirty or when an employee moves from raw to finished production areas must be changed.

All garments should be removed and hung before entering the restroom. Personal clothing and other personal items should be stored in an adequate storage area separate from food handling and storage areas. There should also be a designated change room if employees routinely change clothing at the establishment.

Hand Washing

The hands of employees contain numerous microorganisms, some of which are pathogenic. Approximately 25% of food contamination can be attributed to improper hand washing practices. Hand washing, when done properly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of disease.

The following technique should be followed to eliminate as many bacteria, moulds and virus from hands as possible, thus reducing the likelihood of contamination:

1. Wash hands and wrists in potable water at the warmest temperature can be tolerated.
2. Use an adequate amount of germicidal/anti-bacteria soap that is provided. Sanitizer can also be used in addition to the soap.
3. Scrub your hands vigorously against each other for at least 10-20 seconds. Ensure that the entire hand, front and back, exposed portions of the arm and between your fingers and area under and around fingernails are washed.
4. Rinse hands and wrists making sure all traces of soap are completely removed.
5. Dry hands with a disposable, single-use paper towel. Turn off the faucet with the paper towel and dispose of the paper towel in the appropriate trash receptacle.

An employee should wash their hands after the following activities: before work or before entering the processing area and prior to putting on gloves, aprons, armguards, etc; after using the restroom; after eating, drinking or smoking; after picking up an item off the floor; after coughing or sneezing into your hands; before and after handling raw product; after handling items such as boxes, garbage, labels, brooms, etc; and after each absence from their work station.

Gloves

Gloves must be clean and sanitary and disposed of when they become dirty or torn. Gloves should be changed whenever an employee washes their hands and they should never be put in their pockets or taken into restrooms, lunchrooms, offices or other unclean areas.

Jewelry and Fingernails

Jewelry can contain potential contaminants because they rest next to an employee's skin and hair when worn. Jewelry can also break and fall into the food and harm a customer if consumed. All jewelry should be removed, such as watches, earrings, necklaces and rings, before starting work. This may not apply to medical alert bracelets. Employees who are handling food should not wear artificial nails or wear nail polish and should keep their fingernails clean and trimmed.

Hair Restraints

Hair restraints are required in food processing establishments to prevent hair from contaminating the food. Employees are required to wear proper hair restraints, such as a hairnet or beard net, before they start handling food or starting work at their workstation, before they wash their hands and before entering the processing area. Hair restraints should be worn properly, ensuring that all hair is neatly placed into the restraint.

Eating, Drinking, and Tobacco Use

Eating, drinking, chewing gum and smoking should only be done in designated areas and is prohibited in areas where it may contaminate the food, equipment, utensils or other significant materials.