

Personal Hygiene

In catering, hygiene and sanitation play a vital role in promoting and protecting the health and wellbeing of hundreds of people. The foods, materials, and equipment are subject to constant handling by people at every stage of food production and service. Thus it is the duty of every caterer to ensure that personal hygiene becomes a habit of all food handlers. All food handlers reporting for duty must be fresh, well-groomed and clean.

Few points for personal hygiene that food handlers must follow:

1. **Bathing:** Workers must bathe daily (even twice) as body odor is offensive and skin is the main breeding ground for bacteria. Head bath again twice a week.
2. **Hair:** Wearing clean headgear to be encouraged to prevent hair from falling in food, prevent from touching their scalp and also prevent long hair from getting entangled in machinery.
3. **Teeth and Mouth:** Teeth to be brushed thoroughly twice a day with a moderately hard brush – first thing in the morning and after dinner.
4. **Hands:** Hands are in direct contact with food, so can transfer bacteria and cause illness. To prevent this, hands should be washed:
 - Before beginning work and after a break.
 - After eating or smoking.
 - After using the toilet.
 - After touching infected or unsanitary areas of the body or combing hair or using mobile phones.
 - After using a handkerchief, sneezing or coughing into the hands.
 - After handling raw foods, especially meat, fish and poultry.
 - After handling waste food or refuse.
 - Whenever they are dirty.
 - Hands should be washed thoroughly with plenty of soap and water – preferably rinsed in running water or water stored in clean covered containers with a tap fixed on them. If soap cakes are used, they should be kept dry. Liquid soap is more hygienic and economical to use. Hands must be thoroughly dried by using a roller towel, disposable paper, towels or a hot air dryer. Exposed wounds, cuts, burns can harbor bacteria. They need to be covered with a waterproof dressing. Pus formation, inflammation indicates infection. Such people should not be allowed to handle food for some time.
5. **Finger Nails:** Nails should be trimmed as they harbor germs and can also chip and fall in the food and kept clean. Nail polish used should not be allowed.
6. **Feet and Footwear:** Feet should be washed and kept clean. Always wear socks with shoes to keep away dirt and perspiration. Shoes should form a part of the uniform, sturdy, well-fitting, and well-polished, with a low heel.
7. **Jewelry:** Food handlers should not wear any jewelry as they tend to harbor bacteria and small parts may sometimes drop food into food.
8. **Reporting Illness:** If the food handler feels unwell he/she should report it to his or her supervisor. Such food handlers should be excluded from work until medical clearance is taken.

Habits to be avoided

- Washing hands in sinks used for food preparation. In case there is no separate

- All catering staff should need to be periodically put through a medical check-up to ensure that they are not suffering from worms, T.B, skin or other infections. People with colds, sore throat, boils, and diarrhea should not handle food.

Protective clothing

• **Chef's jacket:** The typical chef's jacket is made of heavy white cotton. This fabric is important because it acts as insulation against the intense heat from stoves and ovens. The cloth is thick enough to prevent the chef from being scalded by hot liquids or spattering hot oil and thermal shocks as the chefs constantly shuttles between the cold storage areas and the hot kitchen areas. Since there are two rows of buttons, the chef can re-button the double-breasted jacket to change sides whenever a side gets soiled during the course of work during a shift. .

Chef's trouser: Chefs wear either black pants or black and white checked pants.

Scarf/ neckerchief: Chefs wear white neckerchiefs, knotted in the front. These were originally designed to absorb perspiration. Nowadays, chefs wear the neckerchiefs to keep the tradition and finish the look of their uniforms.

Apron: Usually made of thick cotton fabric and is worn around the waist with the help of a long string reaching below the knees to protect the chefs from any spilling hot liquids. The string of the apron helps to hold the chefs' kitchen towel in place.

Kitchen towel/ duster: They help in holding and pick up hot pots and pans and also to wipe hands in order to keep them dry.

Chef's hat: The most interesting part of the uniform is the tall white hat; called a "toque." Along with the other conveniences disposable paper hats were invented to look like cloth so that they could be thrown away when they are soiled.

Shoes: The shoes should be black and well polished. To prevent slipping the sole should be made of rubber. Black socks a standard in our kitchens (preferably the sweat absorbing cotton variety).