

Food Safety Standards - Health and hygiene: Responsibilities of food businesses

Chapter 3 (Australia only) Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code

NOTE: The Food Safety Standards do not apply in New Zealand. The provisions of the food standards treaty between Australia and New Zealand do not include food hygiene standards.

Under Food Safety Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements* food businesses are expected to ensure, as far as they can, that their food handlers and anyone else on the premises do not contaminate food. Food businesses also have specific responsibilities relating to the health of people who handle food, the provision of hand washing facilities, telling food handlers of their health and hygiene obligations and the privacy of food handlers.

Making sure that people on the food premises do not contaminate food

Food businesses must do all they practically can to make sure that people on their premises do not contaminate food. This includes food handlers but it also includes other people who visit the premises, such as tradespeople and members of the public. In areas where food is exposed, such as the kitchen, practical steps the business can take include:

- restricting people who are not food handlers from food handling areas; and
- where other people have legitimate reasons for being in these areas, supervising these people to make sure that they do not handle, sneeze, blow, cough or eat over exposed food or surfaces likely to come into contact with food.

A food business must also take practical steps to stop people from smoking or spitting in food preparation areas or in areas where there is unprotected food. Practical steps include:

- putting 'No Smoking' signs on the walls and, if spitting is a problem, putting up signs to say that this is also prohibited; and
- making sure that there are no ashtrays in these areas.

The health of persons who handle food and preventing food contamination

It is very important that people who may be suffering from or carrying certain illnesses or suffering from some other conditions do not handle food or food contact surfaces. This is particularly so if they are likely to contaminate food while they are working.

If a food business is aware that a food handler, or anyone else handling food for the business (such as friends and relatives) has or may have a food-borne illness, the business should make sure that this person does not handle food or food contact surfaces. A food business may suspect a person has a food-borne illness if they have vomiting, diarrhoea, fever or a sore throat with fever.

If a person is known to have or to be carrying a food-borne illness and has been excluded from food handling activities, the person cannot resume food handling until medical advice confirms they are no longer suffering from or carrying a food-borne illness.

If a food business knows or suspects that a food handler or anyone else handling food for the business has an infected skin sore or discharge from their ears, nose or eyes, the food business must make sure this person takes all reasonable measures to prevent contamination of food. For example, an exposed skin sore should be covered with a bandage and waterproof covering and someone with a cold could take medication to stop any nasal discharge.

Hand washbasins for food handlers

Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements* and Standard 3.2.3 *Food Premises and Equipment* both include hand washing requirements.

The hand washing requirements for food handlers are set out in Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*. For further information on these requirements see the separate fact sheet *Food Safety Standards - Health and hygiene, Responsibilities of food handlers*.

Under Standard 3.2.3 *Food Premises and Equipment*, businesses must provide hand basins that are easily accessible and located in the places where food handlers need to wash their hands, for example, in food preparation areas and near the toilets. Businesses must also make sure that the basins have a supply of clean warm running water.

In addition, under Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*, businesses must make sure that the basins are supplied with soap or other cleaners and that staff can thoroughly dry their hands by using, for example, single-use cloths or paper towels. There must be a container for used towels if this is appropriate, and businesses must also make sure that the basins are not used for anything other than washing hands, arms and faces.

Other health and hygiene responsibilities for food businesses

Under Standard 3.2.3 *Food Premises and Equipment*, food businesses must make sure that staff have access to adequate toilets and that there are separate storage areas for personal belongings and clothing, and also for the office equipment and papers and any chemicals used by the business.

Telling food handlers about their health and hygiene responsibilities

Food businesses must tell all their food handlers about the health and hygiene requirements that apply specifically to food handlers. They can do this, for example, by using posters or leaflets or an industry training video. The requirements are set out in Standard 3.2.2 *Food Safety Practices and General Requirements*. For further information on these requirements see the fact sheet *Food Safety Standards – Health and hygiene, Responsibilities of food handlers*. The requirements are designed to ensure that food handlers do whatever is reasonable to make sure that they do not contaminate food.

Protecting the privacy of food handlers

Food handlers must tell their supervisor if they:

- know or suspect they are suffering from or carrying a food-borne disease;
- are suffering from a skin sore or discharges from their ears, nose or eyes and there is a possibility that food may be contaminated as a result of this; or
- know or suspect they have contaminated food while handling it.

If a food handler notifies his or her supervisor of any of the above, the supervisor must not disclose this information to anyone without the consent of the food handler, with the exception of the owner of the business or a food enforcement officer. Also, the food business must not use this information for any purpose other than to protect food from contamination.

Need more information?

Copies of the standards, the guides to these and other fact sheets and supporting material can be found on the FSANZ website (<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/>). Food businesses may also seek advice directly from the Environmental Health Officers at their local council, or from their State or Territory health or health services department and Public Health Units. Information can also be accessed through the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing <http://www.health.gov.au/> .

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