

## UNIT 9 PERSONAL HYGIENE

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- Food handlers can be a source of microbial contamination and therefore need good personal hygiene to ensure safety of food.
- Personal hygiene refers to cleanliness of a person's body and clothes. Hygiene means using sanitary principles to maintain health.

### 9.1 Personal Hygiene of Food Service Personnel

- Food service personnel mean those persons employed in handling, processing, serving or storage of food or cleaning of food service areas or food dispensing equipment.
- Food workers need to be healthy and clean to prepare safe food. Employees who are ill should not come to work; should not touch food or equipment and utensils used to process, prepare and serve food.
- After people recover from the disease, they can become carriers. This means they still carry the disease-causing microorganisms in or on their body and therefore they can contaminate food. Hepatitis virus and salmonella are examples of organisms remaining in the body even after the symptoms are over.

### 9.2 Sources of Microbial Contamination Within the Human Body

- The sources include skin, hands and fingernails, nose, mouth, ears, jewellery and perfume, hair, cigarette smoking, clothing.
- Boils and carbuncles may become a source of bacteria contaminating food e.g. pathogenic staphylococci. Cuts and septic spots also provide an ideal place for bacterial multiplication.
- Hands pick up bacteria when they touch dirty equipment, contaminated food, clothing or various parts of the body; dirty fingernails can transfer many pathogenic bacteria.

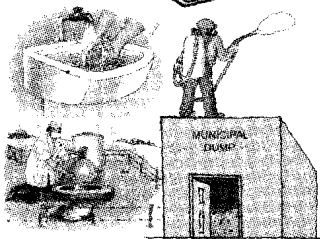
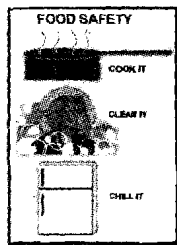
- Coughs and sneezes can carry droplet infection for a considerable distance and persons with bad colds should preferably not handle food.
- Chewing gum, tobacco, pan masala or smoking cigarettes are not desirable. Smoking leads to coughing and droplet infection. Tasting food with fingers or using an unwashed spoon are bad practices.
- Contaminated jewellery can fall into or come in contact with food; can get caught in machinery causing a safety hazard; strong smelling perfume or aftershave should not be used by food handlers.
- Hair, dandruff can contaminate food. The scalp often carries microorganisms especially staphylococci.

### 9.3 Good Hygiene Practices

- Food handlers should keep hands, arms and exposed parts very clean.
- They should cover boils, cuts and septic spots with water proof dressings.
- Employees should wash hands frequently with soap and use a hand-dip sanitizer after touching dirty equipment, contaminated food, clothing or various parts of the body. Washing hands with soap and water removes transient bacteria (bacteria picked up but not growing and multiplying); using a hand soap containing antiseptic or sanitizers controls resident bacteria (bacteria that live and grow there).
- Food handlers must wash their hands regularly and especially:
  - after going to the toilet;
  - on entering the food processing / preparation area and before handling any food or equipment;
  - in between handling raw and cooked food;
  - after combing or touching the hair;
  - after eating, smoking, coughing or blowing the nose;
  - after handling waste food or refuse;
  - after handling cleaning chemicals.
- While handling food, personnel should wear a hairnet or suitable head covering which completely encloses hair.
- Protective clothing should be worn in the work area and should completely cover ordinary clothing. They should not be worn outside food premises, not used to travel to and from work and not worn during lunch time sporting activities. Outdoor clothing and personal effects must not be brought into food rooms unless stored in suitable lockers.

Employees should maintain personal hygiene in the following ways. They should:

- a) Maintain good physical health through good nutrition, enough rest, and physical cleanliness;
- b) Report illness to their employer before working with food so that assignments can be adjusted to protect food from being contaminated;
- c) Practice good hygiene so that they do not contaminate food;
- d) Wash their hands during their work shift after using the toilet; after handling garbage or other dirty items; after handling uncooked meats, egg products, or dairy products; after handling money; after smoking; after coughing and sneezing; and when leaving or returning to food production/service areas;
- e) Maintain personal cleanliness through daily bathing, washing hair at least twice a week, cleaning fingernails daily, use of a cap or hairnet while handling food, and wearing clean underclothing and uniforms;
- f) Not touch food service equipment and utensils with their hands, and use disposable gloves if they have to touch food other than dough;
- g) Follow rules, such as "no smoking," and do anything else needed to protect the food from being contaminated.



A high standard of personal hygiene is essential to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases through food. In order to maintain this standard, food services personnel shall adhere to the following:

- While on duty they shall wear clean outer garments provided for food service activities; however, this working dress shall not be worn outside the food service establishment.
- They shall avoid handling food with their hands; ladles, lifters, tongs or scoops should be used.
- Smoking, combing hair, applying cosmetics, and changing clothing in food service areas are prohibited.
- Female personnel shall wear a hair net. Male personnel who have a hair style that reaches or extends below the collar shall wear a hair net; other male personnel shall wear a cap. Beards worn by food handlers shall be kept short, neatly trimmed and clean.
- Personnel shall thoroughly wash their hands prior to starting work, and also after using the toilet facilities, handling raw foods, using a handkerchief, coughing or sneezing.

## 9.4 Facilities for Employees

The management in any food service unit must have a protocol to make sure employees use hygienic practices and provide them with facilities, services and training to make it easy for the employees to stay clean and hygienic. The facilities which should be provided with their details are summarized as follows:

Facility	Description
1. Toilets	<p>Sanitary requirements specify the number of toilets to be provided; wash hand basins should be provided within the areas with adequate hot and cold water supplies, soap, suitable hand drying facility (paper towels or air driers). Toilets must be ventilated and must not communicate with a food room. There should be a lobby between the toilet and food room, also ventilated.</p> <p>Liquid or powdered soap dispensers should be provided rather than cakes as they are likely to pass contamination from one food handler to another.</p>
2. Hand Wash Basins	<p>Adequate number of hand wash basins suitably located and designated should be available; should be located close to toilet facilities and at strategic places in the premises so that workers have convenient access.</p> <p>Hand wash basins must be provided with hot and cold (or appropriately mixed) running water, materials for cleaning hands and for hygienic drying.</p> <p>Antibacterial soap and paper towels are recommended; where necessary, provisions for washing food must be separate from the hand washing facility.</p>
3. Hand Dip	<p>Bowl containing sanitizers to be made available at convenient locations; sanitizers to be changed everyday to prevent bacterial slime at the bottom of the bowl.</p>
4. Cloak Rooms	<p>At entrance of factory/ food service establishment with adequate changing facilities; provision for food handlers to change and store their street clothes and personal effects, good practice to have separate changing rooms and to provide secure storage for personal effects (not food); cloak rooms should have toilet facilities and in humid areas, showers.</p>
5. Canteens	<p>For employees; clean dining, service, storage, waste disposal, washrooms and kitchen; screened corridors and self-closing doors; ready availability of drinking water.</p>
6. Health Facilities	<p>First aid room (also to be used as rest room); medical officer if number of employees is more; putting in place measures to minimize hazards associated with staff.</p>



### Key Terms

**Boils:** Severe local infection caused by infections in hair follicles or skin glands after the outer layers of skin gets damaged.

**Carbuncle:** A cluster of boils.

**Food- borne illness:** Illness or disease caused by the ingestion of foods containing toxic or infectious agents.



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