

Segment Three - People Cause Problems

We spent the last segment telling you that **pathogenic** bacteria were the bad guys.

We suppose that's still true, but they don't know any better.

It's **people** who put them in a position to cause trouble.

Sometimes because people do things they shouldn't and sometimes because people don't do things they should.

If everyone who handled food used simple and hygienic methods of working, in a clean workplace, food poisoning would be virtually unknown.

AIMS OF THIS SEGMENT

The main aim of this segment is to help you to achieve Objective - *Assess standards of hygiene and maintain the high standard necessary when handling food.*

At the end of this segment you will be able to:

- Judge your own level of hygiene and those of others working with you;
- State the reasons for maintaining high standards of personal hygiene;
- List general rules for people to follow when handling fish, or any other food;
- Be alert to the need for the constant supervision of personal hygiene on fish handling premises.

THE FOOD CHAIN

Many people don't spend too much time thinking about how the food they eat finally arrives on their plate.

They probably know very little of how much handling and preparation it goes through before it gets on to their plate.

Since you are involved with the handling and preparation of fish, perhaps you could write down the 'chain' of events from it being caught, up to it being served to be eaten?

Your reply may be better than ours, but at a minimum:



A lot of people have been in contact with the fish and there have been a lot of opportunities for contamination.

I Never Ordered Food Poisoning!

Let's think about a fish meal in a restaurant for a minute. You've ordered, and your meal arrives at the table.

You are the customer and you're the last link in a long chain which goes back to the sea.

Is there anything about the rest of the chain that strikes you as being important?

We'll leave you a space to jot down any thoughts.

Quite a tricky one this because there are a lot of things that matter.

The main point is **that the customer is helpless**. He has no control over what is on his plate and has no knowledge about how it's been handled.

Of course, if the food was really bad, he'd probably notice. But, food contaminated with food poisoning bacteria can look, smell and taste perfectly OK. So if it was covered in food poisoning bacteria he might not know the difference until it was too late!

The customer has to **trust** all the people who supply the food to protect him.



Remember, people who handle food have other peoples' health in their hands - nothing is more dangerous to people than other people.

Breaking Rules

Later on we'll be talking about rules and regulations which govern food handling. Like most laws it is often easy to get away with breaking them.

The courts could never cope, for example, with all the people who exceed the speed limit when driving their vehicles.

You can usually get away with it but you're taking a chance of hurting someone if you're careless and of occasionally being caught.

The same applies to food poisoning.

Although there are laws about handling food, remember that other people are relying on food handlers to take care of the food they are going to eat.

Remember, food handlers have a legal and a moral responsibility to the people who buy food they have handled.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

What's the Problem?

Everyone's body can be a source of a lot of bacteria, especially around the mouth, nose, genitals and anus.

People are very dirty in the bacterial sense, even when they look clean and tidy.

The bacteria that can do most harm like us a lot! They try hard to stay with us all the time.

There's more bad news. We're not only bacterially dirty, but it's also impossible to clean us completely, without causing injury. So people are always likely to contaminate food with bacteria.

What Can You Do?

The best thing would be to get rid of all the bacteria. Since you can't, you just have to do the next best thing.

'The next best thing' is:

- Reduce the numbers as much as possible;
- Avoid spreading them around;
- Thoroughly clean your knives, equipment and working surfaces which can stand harsh treatment;
- Avoid outside contamination from other sources;
- Proper hand washing at all times.

But it's more bother.

You have to face this one and recognise the truth.

Clean handling takes time and effort, but is very worthwhile.

You can't just do it once and then forget it.

It's just like gardening, where the weeds never stop trying to take over.

It's easy not to bother, but trouble is guaranteed if you don't.

The best way of clean handling is to set up routines which we'll talk about later.

Once these routines are set up and become automatic they stop being extra bother.

The thing we want you to realise from this section is that it **all depends on you.**

A lot of other things happen that you can't influence, but in the area of personal cleanliness you have complete control.

Your customer needs you to care.

HAND WASHING

We'd like you to carry out a little experiment.

Try to count how many times your hands touch something in the next five minutes.

We've already lost count of how many times we've scratched our heads and propped our faces in our hands while just writing a page.

People touch things a lot when their hands aren't occupied in some task or another.

Each touch picks up some bacteria and puts down some others.

As a matter of fact, it's almost impossible to stop people from using their hands. They get very restless and annoyed if their hands are restrained in any way.

The answer to dirty hands is, of course to wash them well and often, as a routine.

Extra hand washings are also needed in the following cases:

- Before handling food;
- Between food handling operations (to prevent different foods from contaminating each other through you);
- After using the lavatory and before leaving the washroom;
- After smoking, coughing, sneezing or using a handkerchief.

Suitable hand washing facilities must be available for you to use and we'll talk about them in a later segment.

Do it well!

Washing hands **does not mean** a quick rinse and a wipe on the overalls.

It means using:

- Soap;
- Hot water;
- Nail brush;
- Drying in a hygienic manner, using disposable paper towels or hot air.

It is also important to **avoid instant recontamination** from doors, or clothes or other surfaces such as fridge or chiller door handles.

Some firms provide hand creams which contain a substance which kills bacteria. These are well worth using because they protect the hands during frequent washing and help to keep cracks in your skin smooth, reducing the places where bacteria can lodge. Bactericidal soaps also can be used.

A bath or shower each day is not excessive if you're a food handler.

Hair should be shampooed every other day at least.

GOOD HEALTH AND GOOD PRACTICE

Cuts, Grazes, Boils

Most cuts contain bacteria. All boils and pimples contain thousands. The law requires all cuts, grazes, sores and boils to be **completely covered by clean brightly coloured waterproof dressings**.



Coughing, Sneezing, Nose blowing, Spitting

These all need to be avoided where food is being handled, because saliva and mucus can contain millions of poisoning bacteria ready to contaminate your food! Use of handkerchief or clean paper tissue is essential and **hands must be immediately washed again**.



Smoking where food is handled is against the law.

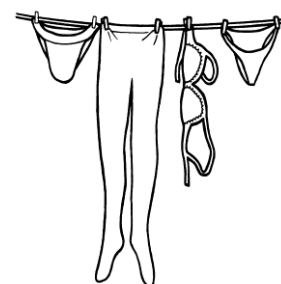
This is because smoking involves frequent hand to mouth contact, so the hand is always contaminated with mouth bacteria including Staphylococcus.



Clothing

Hygienic dress for food handlers starts with clean underclothes every day.

Top clothing should be adequately covered by protective clothing. The reasons for this are to protect your own clothing from splashes and to prevent contamination of food from contact with your everyday clothing



It is very important that outdoor clothing, especially shoes, are kept outside food rooms. It also important that food handling clothes are not worn outside during tea and lunch breaks etc. unless you change into clean clothes before starting work again.

Protective overalls should be changed at least every day, and more often if they become obviously soiled.

Plastic or rubber aprons and wellingtons should be scrubbed at least daily with hot water and disinfectant.

It's a **legal requirement** that protective clothing must be worn by every person working in a food handling area.

Head Covering

Your customers would like you to keep your hair on your head! They definitely don't want it on their food!

If you handle food, **all your hair should be enclosed in suitable headgear**. This stops debris from your head getting on food and it also stops you contaminating your hands from your hair.



A lot of people are not too keen on headgear and resist proper cover. It's still the right thing to do even if you don't like the idea.

Jewellery, Watches, Nail Varnish, Rings

All jewellery, watches and rings harbour dirt and bacteria. Loose bits from these and flakes of nail varnish often end up in food products causing both physical and bacterial contamination, sometimes poisoning and usually complaints.



Most of these things, including nail varnish, have cracks where bacteria can lodge and so must be kept away from food.

Some companies use disposable gloves that are changed at frequent intervals.

General Health

If you're feeling ill, you are likely to be carrying a lot more bacteria than usual. They can often be the ones that cause food poisoning.

So, if you have diarrhoea, vomiting, septic cuts, boils, discharge from eye, ear or nose or have a bad cold you should not handle food.

Some people who may be recovering from a bout of food poisoning may still be carrying the poisoning bacteria inside them. Other people who appear to be completely healthy may also be infected with bacteria that cause food poisoning. These types of persons are often called **carriers**. This is one of the reasons why it is important to contact your doctor and employer if you suffer from illness after returning from holiday abroad. Although you may appear to have recovered, you might still be carrying the bacteria in your gut.

By Law - **you** must notify your employer (or supervisor) if you are ill before starting work. They may give you another job to do or send you home. You may require a medical clearance before restarting work as a food handler, or you may return to work 48hrs after all symptoms have gone.

So, if you are ill and off work with diarrhoea your responsibility is to inform your supervisor or manager BEFORE returning to work so that they can decide if you will need a medical clearance or if there's another (non-food) job you can do.

**SAQ6**

Where, and about how many times is fish exposed to possible contamination by handling between catching and eating?

**SAQ36**

What guarantees does the customer in a restaurant have that the food they are about to eat is not a danger to their health?

**SAQ10**

How is personal hygiene different from other areas of clean food handling?

**SAQ1**

- a. Why did we say that people are bacterially dirty?
- b. Why is it impossible to clean people satisfactorily?

a.

b.

**SAQ53**

Why is routine cleaning better than cleaning either when required or when you feel like it?

**SAQ32**

- a. Why is handwashing the single most important part of personal hygiene?
- b. How often should you wash your hands?

a.

b.

**SAQ20**

- a. What are the requirements for protective clothing?
- b. What should you do about your hair?

a.

b.

**SAQ13**

- a. What should you do about cuts, grazes and boils?
- b. What should you do if you have diarrhoea, vomiting or discharges?

a.

b.

SUMMARY

This segment is mainly a list of do's and don'ts on the subject of personal hygiene, when handling food.

We've tried to explain why you should care and what you can do to help keep food in first class condition.

Remember – you're just like a train driver or aeroplane pilot - a lot of people are relying on you to look after them.

We have now completed this segment and you have achieved Objective 3

