



Section 4, Staff

In this section, you will learn

- ▶ What is required from the staff?
- ▶ Who needs a hygiene passport?
- ▶ How should the state of health of employees be examined?
- ▶ What kind of protective clothing is needed?
- ▶ When and how to wash your hands?

Persons who process perishable foods professionally must have a hygiene passport and wear appropriate protective clothing. A hygiene passport is a certificate of competence for demonstrating familiarity with food hygiene.

If necessary, the employees must also be able to reliably demonstrate that they do not have salmonella infection. The purpose of all these requirements is to ensure the safety of foodstuffs.

A hygiene passport

Personnel processing perishable foodstuffs must demonstrate an adequate working knowledge of food hygiene. This can be demonstrated by a hygiene passport received through a competence test or as part of a food industry degree.

The employer must ensure that all persons who process perishable foods have a hygiene passport. The hygiene passport must be obtained no later than three (3) months from the start of employment. Competence tests are organised and hygiene passports issued by competence testers approved by Evira.

Employees' state of health

If necessary, the employees must provide a health certificate or, in practice, proof that they do not carry salmonellosis. The aim is to find carriers of the salmonella infection and to prevent the spread of salmonella through food-processing personnel.

New employees require a health examination at the employer's occupational health care provider. If necessary, a salmonella test will also be taken.

Salmonella tests should also be taken immediately if there is cause to suspect a salmonella infection. For example, if the employee has been travelling abroad and manifests symptoms of a stomach disorder.

Employees with a stomach disease are not permitted to process food. In addition to salmonella, many other bacteria and viruses can also cause stomach disorders. More information on stomach disorders transmitted through food is available on the website where the link to this guide is found.

What is salmonella?

Salmonella is an intestinal bacterium that can be transmitted through contaminated food or water and causes food poisoning.

The symptoms of a salmonella infection or salmonellosis can include

- nausea;
- abdominal pain;
- diarrhoea;
- fever; and
- headache.

How does salmonella spread?

Salmonella is most commonly transmitted through raw or poorly cooked poultry or pork, or through raw milk and vegetables.

Salmonella can also spread through foodstuffs contaminated by an infected worker.

Protective clothing

Employees who process food must wear appropriate protective clothing. The purpose of protective clothing is to prevent the contamination of foods being processed. Protective clothing must be changed and washed sufficiently often.

The establishment is responsible for protective clothing

The establishment must provide appropriate protective clothing, headgear and work shoes for staff working in food production areas and for the establishment inspector. The establishment must also keep the clothing clean and in good condition.

You should also provide cut-resistant gloves and plastic aprons to employees working at a cutting plant. Cut-resistant gloves contain or are made of steel mesh.

Take into account different hygiene levels and access routes between different hygiene zones

Consider your establishment's various hygiene levels in the use of protective clothing and shoes and the access routes between different hygiene zones.

Beware of cross-contamination, i.e., bringing dirt from other parts of the establishment into 'clean areas'. Clean areas are the areas in which you handle unpackaged, perishable foodstuffs.

Covering your protective clothing when you go out

If you go outdoors, you should change out of or cover your protective clothing.

For example, you can put on an overcoat to protect your protective clothing.

Protective gloves

Employees can also wear protective gloves. Protective gloves are intended to protect food from dirt and harmful bacteria and viruses, which may spread through the hands of employees.

When must protective gloves be used?

Protective gloves must be used at least by employees with

- artificial nails;
- jewellery; or
- cuts on their hands.

Personnel who use protective gloves must change them often enough and wash their hands sufficiently often.

There are different kinds of protective gloves. You will need to select gloves appropriate for your purpose. The processing of fatty foods requires different protective gloves than processing dry food.

Use of jewellery and working with food?

■ **What is the principal rule regarding the use of jewellery?**

Employees working with food, especially ones processing non-prepacked foodstuffs, should not wear jewellery. The use of jewellery can be allowed, however, if they are covered with protective clothing.

■ **Why is jewellery a risk?**

Wearing jewellery can pose a food hygiene risk. For example, moisture and dirt can accumulate under a ring. A piece of jewellery or part thereof can break off and end up in the food.

■ **Are false eyelashes permitted?**

Use of false eyelashes is not recommended. They can be permitted if there is no possibility of them falling into the food.

■ **Which piercings are forbidden?**

The use of visible piercings is forbidden if they cannot be covered with protective clothing.

■ **Why are piercings a risk?**

Piercings break the skin and mucous membranes and pose a hygiene risk. A large number of bacteria live on the skin and mucous membranes and can be transmitted into food through the hands.

■ **Are piercings permitted on the inside of the mouth?**

Piercings inside the mouth can be permitted.

Washing hands

Hands have their own natural bacteria and can pick up bacteria from dirty surfaces. Some bacteria are harmless, but others may cause food poisoning.

For the prevention of food poisoning, it is essential to wash the hands sufficiently often when processing foodstuffs.

Wash your hands carefully:

1. always before starting work;
2. during work if necessary;
3. between work stages, for example if you have to clean clotted blood, abscesses or other altered or dirty parts of the carcass;
4. after visiting the bathroom;
5. after smoking; and
6. after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

A cut on your hand? Follow this procedure:

1. Protect the wound with, for example, a plaster.
2. Wear protective gloves.

When you use protective gloves, you prevent the spread of bacteria from the wound to unpackaged food.

Summary

- ▶ Those processing food must be able to demonstrate the ability to process it hygienically. This is demonstrated with a hygiene passport.
- ▶ Personnel who process food must provide a health certificate at the start of employment and whenever necessary thereafter. The certificate demonstrates that the employee does not carry salmonella or other infectious diseases.
- ▶ Employees who process food must wear protective clothing.
- ▶ At establishments in which meat is handled, protective clothing includes at least an appropriate uniform, headgear and work shoes.
- ▶ Protective gloves are used if necessary.
- ▶ Follow the instructions on hand-washing.