

# Personal Hygiene & Contamination Prevention

Food safety is everyone's responsibility in a food service establishment. Whether you're a manager or a food handler, understanding and implementing proper hygiene practices is crucial to preventing foodborne illnesses and maintaining your establishment's reputation and compliance with health regulations.



# Manager Responsibilities in Food Safety



## Establish Clear Policies

Create comprehensive personal hygiene policies that align with local health codes and food safety standards. These policies should be written clearly and made accessible to all staff members.



## Train and Retrain Staff

Provide initial training for all new hires and schedule regular refresher courses for existing staff. Training should cover all aspects of food safety and personal hygiene relevant to their roles.



## Supervise and Model Behavior

Consistently monitor food handling practices and demonstrate proper techniques yourself. Your behavior sets the standard for the entire team and reinforces the importance of food safety protocols.



## Update Policies

Stay informed about changes in food safety regulations and scientific best practices. Revise your establishment's policies accordingly and communicate updates to all staff.

# How Food Handlers Can Contaminate Food

## Physical Conditions

- Having a foodborne illness
- Experiencing symptoms like diarrhea, vomiting, or jaundice
- Having wounds that contain pathogens
- Being an asymptomatic carrier of pathogens

## Actions That Spread Contaminants

- Sneezing or coughing near food
- Having contact with an ill person
- Touching face, nose, or forehead during food preparation
- Working with unwashed hands after touching contaminants

Every food handler must recognize how their health and behavior can directly impact food safety. Pathogens can be transferred from workers to food through numerous pathways, often without visible signs of contamination. Being aware of these potential contamination routes is the first step in prevention.

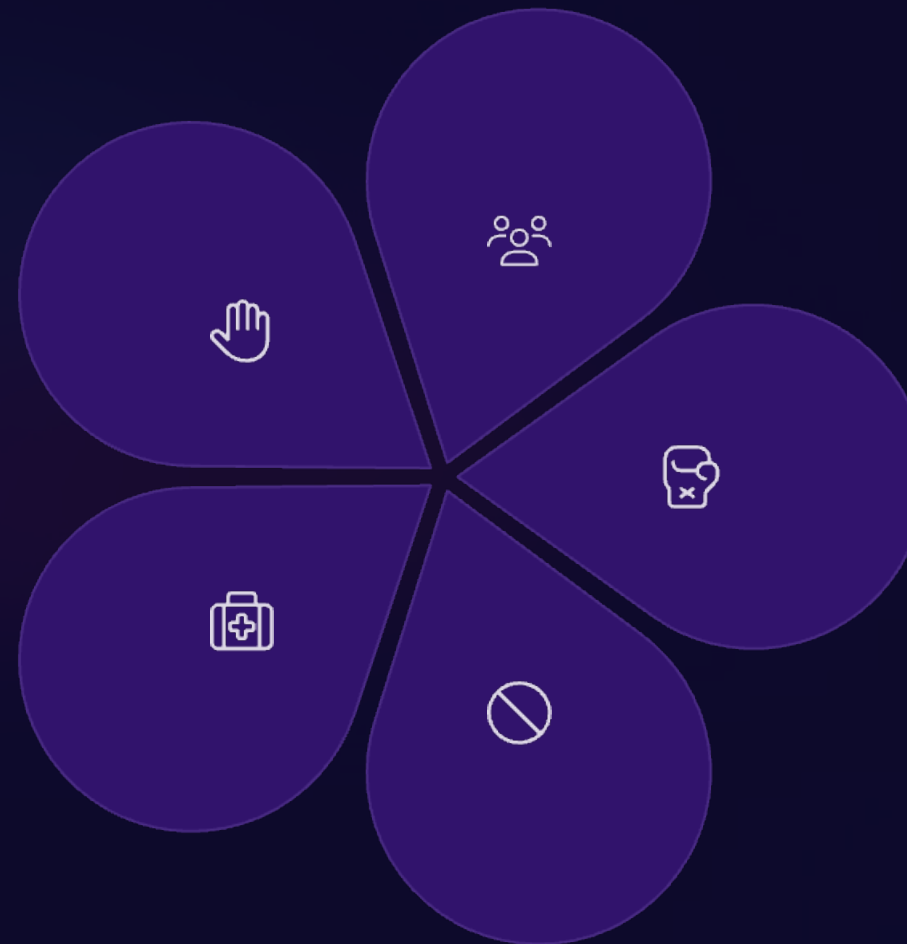
# Elements of a Good Personal Hygiene Program

## Handwashing

Thorough and frequent handwashing using proper technique and at appropriate times

## Health Maintenance

Reporting illnesses and properly covering wounds



## Personal Cleanliness

Regular bathing, clean uniforms, and proper grooming

## Glove Use

Proper selection, application, and changing of disposable gloves

## Behavior Control

Avoiding habits like touching face, eating, or smoking in prep areas

A comprehensive personal hygiene program addresses multiple aspects of cleanliness and behavior. Training staff on these policies and consistently enforcing them creates a culture of food safety that becomes second nature to your team.





# When to Wash Hands: Part 1



## Before starting work

Always wash hands immediately upon entering the kitchen, even if you've just arrived at work or are returning from a break.



## Before & after handling raw meat, poultry, & seafood

These raw items contain pathogens that can cross-contaminate other foods & surfaces if proper handwashing isn't performed.



## After touching hair, face, or body

Our bodies harbor bacteria that can be transferred to food. Wash hands immediately after any contact with your face or hair.



## After sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue

Respiratory droplets contain pathogens that can easily contaminate hands & subsequently transfer to food or surfaces.

# When to Wash Hands: Part 2



## **After eating, drinking, smoking, or chewing gum**

These activities introduce mouth bacteria to your hands and require handwashing before resuming food handling duties.



## **After taking out garbage**

Trash containers harbor numerous pathogens that can transfer to hands & contaminate food preparation areas.



## **After handling chemicals**

Cleaning products & other chemicals can leave residues that may contaminate food & pose health risks to consumers.



## **After clearing tables or busing dirty dishes**

Used dishes, glasses, and utensils contain saliva and food residue that can harbor pathogens.







# When to Wash Hands: Part 3



## **After touching clothing or aprons**

Uniforms and aprons collect food particles and can harbor bacteria, especially after extended wear.



## **After handling money**

Currency passes through many hands and can be a significant source of contamination.



## **After leaving and returning to prep areas**

Any time you exit & re-enter the kitchen or prep area, handwashing is required to prevent introducing contaminants.



## **After handling service animals or aquatic animals**

Animals naturally carry bacteria that can be harmful when transferred to food products.

# Hand Antiseptics in Food Service

## What Are Hand Antiseptics?

Hand antiseptics are alcohol-based gels, foams, or liquids that reduce the number of pathogens on hands. They contain antimicrobial ingredients that kill many common bacteria & viruses.

## When to Use Them

Hand antiseptics should NEVER replace proper handwashing. They may be used as an additional step after handwashing, but not as a substitute. Most appropriate when transitioning between tasks where hands are already clean.

## Limitations

Hand antiseptics don't remove physical dirt, grease, or certain types of pathogens like norovirus. They're less effective on visibly soiled hands and provide only temporary protection compared to thorough handwashing.

When selecting hand antiseptics, choose only FDA-approved products specifically formulated for food service environments. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper application and contact time.



# Proper Hand Care for Food Handlers

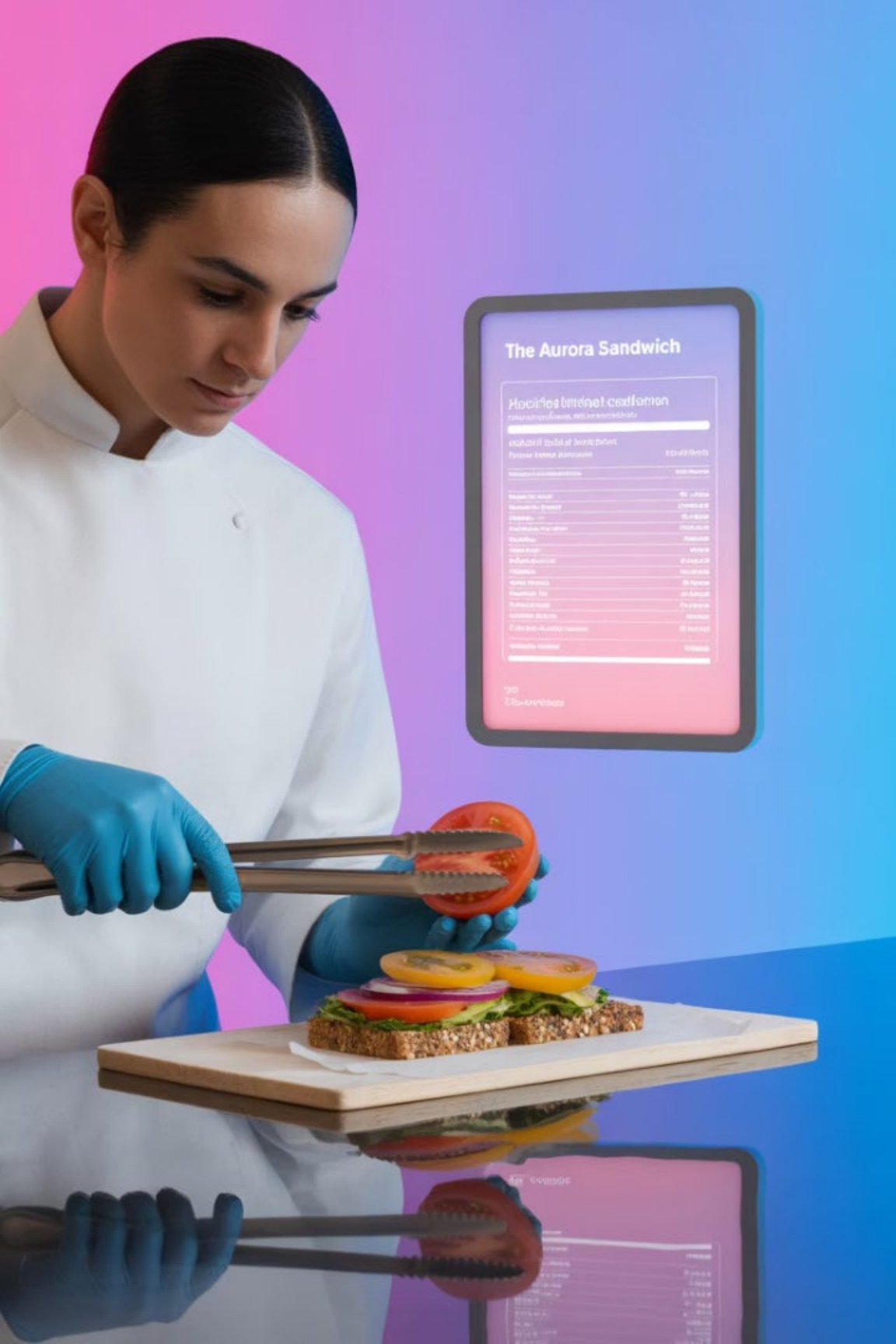
## Fingernail Requirements

- Keep nails trimmed short and filed smooth
- Nails should not extend beyond fingertips
- Avoid false fingernails or nail extensions
- Do not wear nail polish (can chip into food)

## Wound Management

- Cover hand/wrist wounds with waterproof bandage plus single-use glove
- Cover arm wounds with impermeable cover
- Cover other body wounds with tight-fitting bandage
- Report infected wounds to manager immediately

Proper hand care is a critical component of food safety. Long nails, artificial nails, and nail polish can harbor bacteria that are difficult to remove with handwashing. Additionally, they increase the risk of physical contamination if they break off into food. Wounds must be properly covered to prevent pathogen transfer.



# Preventing Bare-Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Foods



## Why Avoid Bare Hands?

Hands can transfer pathogens to food even after washing



## Use Utensils

Tongs, spatulas, deli papers



## Wear Single-Use Gloves

When utensils aren't practical



## Follow Local Regulations

Some jurisdictions have specific requirements

Ready-to-eat foods won't undergo further cooking to kill pathogens, making them vulnerable to contamination. Even with proper handwashing, hands can still harbor microorganisms that can transfer to food. Using appropriate barriers provides an additional layer of protection.

# Single-Use Gloves: Selection and Types

## Approved Materials

- Nitrile (blue, chemical resistant)
- Vinyl (clear or colored, economical)
- Polyethylene (looser fit, for brief tasks)
- Must be FDA approved for food contact

## Sizing Considerations

- Stock various sizes (S, M, L, XL)
- Proper fit prevents tearing & discomfort
- Too tight: may tear during use
- Too loose: reduces dexterity and control

## Latex Alternatives

- Avoid latex due to allergy concerns
- Nitrile offers similar protection without allergen risk
- Some jurisdictions prohibit latex in food service
- Consider both worker and customer allergies

Selecting the appropriate gloves for your operation is crucial for both food safety and worker comfort. Different tasks may require different glove types. For instance, polyethylene gloves may work for brief tasks like garnishing, while more durable nitrile gloves are better for extensive food preparation.



# Proper Glove Use Techniques

## Before Putting On Gloves

Always wash and thoroughly dry hands before donning gloves. Putting gloves on wet hands increases the risk of bacterial growth in the warm, moist environment created inside the glove.

Proper glove use starts with clean hands and includes careful application techniques. Remember that gloves are not a substitute for handwashing but an additional barrier against contamination. Even with gloves, avoid touching your face, hair, or other non-food items to prevent cross-contamination.

## Putting On Gloves Properly

Hold gloves by the edge when putting them on to avoid contaminating the surface. Choose the correct size for a comfortable fit that won't tear easily. Never blow into gloves to open them or roll them to make them easier to put on.

## Checking Glove Integrity

Once gloves are on, visually inspect them for rips, tears, or holes. If any damage is found, remove the gloves, wash hands again, and put on a new pair before handling food.

# When to Change Gloves



## When Gloves Become Dirty or Torn

Any visible soiling or damage compromises the protective barrier and requires immediate glove change.



## Before Beginning a Different Task

When switching between food preparation activities, especially moving from handling raw foods to ready-to-eat items.



## After an Interruption

Following any activity that diverts attention from food handling, such as answering the phone, handling money, or touching equipment.



## After Four Hours of Continuous Use

Even if they appear clean, gloves worn for extended periods accumulate sweat and bacteria on the inside and should be changed.

Remember that gloves can give a false sense of security. They become contaminated just like bare hands when they touch unclean surfaces. The key difference is that while hands can be washed, gloves must be changed completely, with handwashing occurring between each glove change.

# Step 1: Proper Handwashing Technique



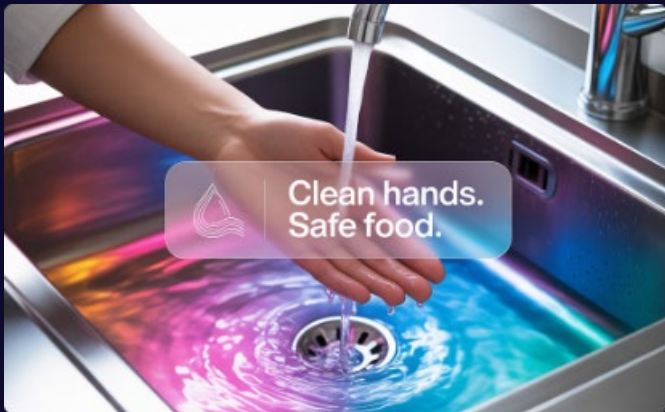
## Wet Hands and Arms

Begin by wetting your hands and forearms with clean, running water as hot as you can comfortably tolerate. The water temperature should be at least 85°F (29°C) to help remove oils that can harbor bacteria.



## Water Temperature

The ideal water temperature balances comfort with effectiveness. Water that's too cool won't remove oils effectively, while water that's too hot can damage skin. Aim for water that feels warm but not painfully hot.



## Proper Coverage

Ensure water thoroughly wets not just your hands but also your forearms up to the elbow if you'll be handling food directly. This establishes a clean baseline before applying soap.

This first step creates the foundation for effective handwashing. Using warm water helps loosen dirt and oils on the skin while making the process more comfortable. In facilities without hot water access, cold water with soap is still effective, but may require more thorough scrubbing.



# Step 2: Applying Soap Properly



## Use Liquid Soap

Always use liquid soap from a dispenser rather than bar soap, which can harbor bacteria.



## Apply Generous Amount

Use enough soap to build up a rich lather that covers all surfaces of hands and wrists.



## Operate Dispenser Properly

Use wrist, forearm, or foot pedal to dispense soap to avoid recontaminating clean hands.

The effectiveness of handwashing depends greatly on using sufficient soap. Antimicrobial soaps designed for food service environments provide additional protection against foodborne pathogens, but any liquid soap is better than none. Dispensers should be kept full and maintained regularly to ensure proper operation.



# Step 3: Scrubbing Technique



Proper scrubbing technique is the most critical part of handwashing. The mechanical action of scrubbing, combined with soap, is what removes pathogens from skin. Pay special attention to areas often missed: thumbs, fingertips, between fingers, and wrists. Use a nail brush if available for cleaning under fingernails.

# Step 4: Rinse Thoroughly



## Use Running Water

Never rinse in standing water as it can recontaminate hands



## Maintain Water Temperature

Continue using warm water throughout the rinsing process



## Position Hands Correctly

Keep fingertips pointed down so water flows from arms to fingertips

Thorough rinsing removes soap residue along with loosened dirt, oils, and pathogens. Inadequate rinsing can leave soap residue that may irritate skin and potentially contaminate food. Keep hands positioned with fingertips pointing downward so water flows from the cleanest areas (forearms) to the most contaminated areas (fingertips).



# Step 5: Proper Drying Method



## Paper Towels

Use single-use paper towels to thoroughly dry all surfaces of hands and wrists. Paper towels provide additional mechanical removal of pathogens.



## Air Dryers

If using air dryers, allow them to completely dry your hands. Partially wet hands spread pathogens more readily than completely dry hands.



## Avoid Cross-Contamination

Use paper towels to turn off manual faucets and open restroom doors to prevent recontaminating your clean hands.

Drying is a critical final step that's often rushed or overlooked. Wet hands transfer pathogens more easily than dry hands, so thorough drying is essential for food safety. Cloth towels are not acceptable in food service as they can harbor bacteria and lead to cross-contamination between users.

# Why Illness Matters in Food Service

## Public Health Risk

Food workers who handle food while ill can easily transfer pathogens to food, potentially causing widespread illness among customers. Even mild symptoms can indicate serious foodborne illnesses that are highly contagious.

## Regulatory Requirements

The FDA Food Code provides specific rules about when workers must be prevented from handling food or excluded from the workplace entirely. These regulations are legally enforceable and designed to protect public health.

## Business Consequences

Foodborne illness outbreaks traced to your establishment can result in negative publicity, loss of customer trust, lawsuits, and even closure. Following illness reporting protocols protects both customers and the business.

Today we'll examine when a food worker must be excluded entirely from the workplace versus when they can work with restrictions. Understanding these distinctions helps managers make appropriate decisions that balance operational needs with public health protection.

# Exclusion vs. Restriction: What's the Difference?

## Exclusion

**Definition:** The employee is not permitted to work in the food establishment in any capacity.

**When Required:** For conditions that pose significant risk of disease transmission through food, such as active symptoms of foodborne illness or certain diagnosed infections.

**Action Required:** Employee must stay home until medical clearance or symptom resolution according to regulatory requirements.

## Restriction

**Definition:** The employee may work in the facility but cannot work with exposed food, clean equipment, utensils, linens, or unwrapped single-service items.

**When Required:** For conditions that pose moderate risk that can be managed with proper controls.

**Possible Tasks:** Cashiering, hosting, maintenance work, administrative duties.

Both exclusion and restriction are important tools for preventing the spread of foodborne illness. Managers must understand the requirements for each and apply them consistently to all staff members. The decision between exclusion and restriction depends on the specific condition and its transmission risk.



# When Employees Must Be Excluded



## Diagnosed with "Big Five" Pathogens

Any diagnosis of Norovirus, Hepatitis A, Shigella, E. coli (STEC), or Salmonella Typhi requires immediate exclusion, regardless of symptoms. These pathogens are highly contagious and can cause severe illness.



## Experiencing Acute Gastrointestinal Symptoms

Workers with vomiting or diarrhea must be excluded, even without a diagnosis. These symptoms indicate potential foodborne illness that can easily contaminate food and surfaces.



## Showing Signs of Jaundice

Yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice) that appeared within the last 7 days requires exclusion. This is a sign of Hepatitis A, which can be transmitted before symptoms appear.



## Infected Wounds That Cannot Be Covered

Open, infected wounds or boils containing pus that cannot be completely covered with an impermeable cover and glove (if on hands) require exclusion.

# When Employees Must Be Restricted



## Sore Throat with Fever

Indicates possible Streptococcal infection



## Covered Infected Wounds

Properly protected with impermeable cover



## Recent Exposure to Foodborne Pathogens

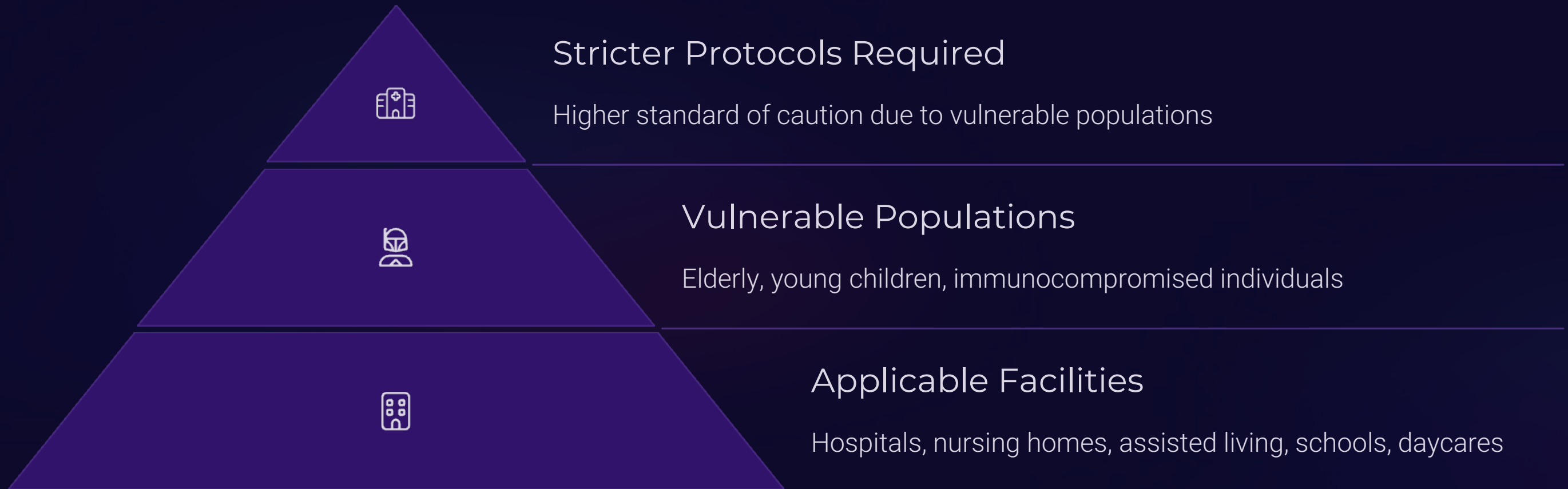
Exposure without symptoms may require restriction

Restricted employees can remain at work but must be assigned to duties that don't involve contact with food, clean equipment, or food-contact surfaces. If such alternative duties aren't available, the employee may need to be excluded by default. Note that in high-risk establishments serving vulnerable populations (like nursing homes or daycares), some conditions that normally warrant restriction may instead require exclusion.

“Stay Safe”❤️

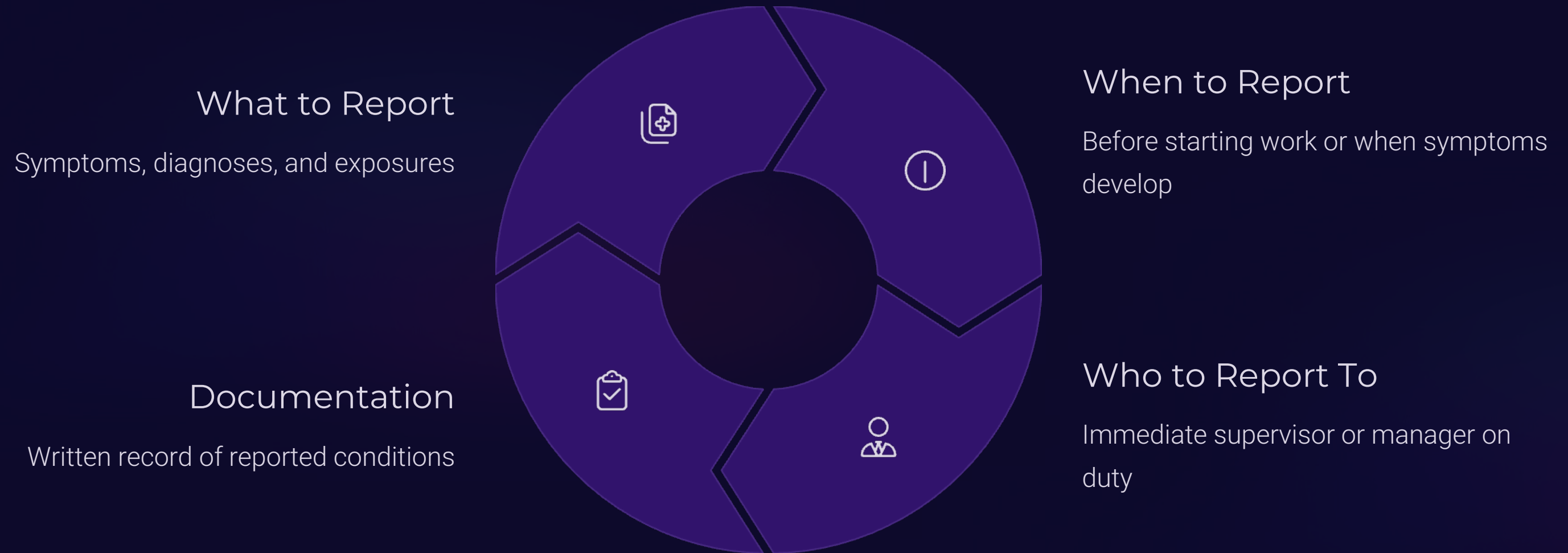


# Special Rules for High-Risk Establishments



Establishments serving highly susceptible populations must follow more stringent requirements because their customers are more likely to develop serious complications from foodborne illnesses. For example, a food worker with a sore throat and fever who might be restricted in a regular restaurant must be excluded entirely from working in a nursing home kitchen until receiving medical clearance.

# Employee Illness Reporting Requirements



Food workers have a legal and ethical responsibility to report health conditions that could impact food safety. Managers should create a non-punitive reporting culture that encourages honesty. Establishments should have a documented policy for illness reporting that includes a system for tracking reports and the actions taken in response.



# Reportable Symptoms

## Gastrointestinal Symptoms

- Vomiting (any instance)
- Diarrhea (loose stools)
- Abdominal cramps with other symptoms

## Jaundice

- Yellowing of skin
- Yellowing of eye whites (sclera)
- Often indicates Hepatitis A

## Other Concerning Symptoms

- Sore throat with fever
- Open, infected wounds
- Persistent sneezing, coughing, or runny nose

Even mild versions of these symptoms must be reported immediately. Many foodborne illnesses begin with seemingly minor symptoms that can worsen over time. Symptoms should be reported regardless of the suspected cause - even if the employee believes the symptoms are from non-contagious conditions like pregnancy, medication side effects, or food intolerance.



# Reportable Diagnoses



## Norovirus

Highly contagious virus that causes acute gastroenteritis with vomiting and diarrhea. Responsible for many foodborne illness outbreaks in restaurants.



## Hepatitis A

Liver infection that spreads through fecal-oral route. Can be transmitted before symptoms appear and causes jaundice in later stages.



## Shigella spp.

Bacteria causing severe diarrhea that may contain blood or mucus. Highly infectious with a very low dose needed to cause illness.



## E. coli (STEC)

Shiga toxin-producing strains that can cause serious complications including kidney failure. Often associated with undercooked ground beef.

Employees must report any diagnosis of these pathogens even if they're not currently experiencing symptoms. Some infections can be transmitted during recovery or by asymptomatic carriers. A doctor's note or health department clearance is typically required before returning to food handling duties.

# Reportable Exposures

## Household Member Diagnosed

When someone you live with is diagnosed with a foodborne illness or has symptoms consistent with such an illness.



## Eating at Implicated Establishment

If you consumed food at a restaurant confirmed to be the source of a foodborne illness outbreak.



## Travel to High-Risk Areas

Recent travel to regions with active outbreaks of foodborne illness or areas with endemic Hepatitis A or typhoid fever.



## Exposure to Contaminated Water

Drinking from or swimming in water that has been identified as a source of a foodborne illness outbreak.

Exposure reporting is especially important because it allows managers to monitor employees who might develop illness in the coming days or weeks. Depending on the type of exposure and the pathogen involved, restriction from food handling duties might be necessary even without symptoms.

# Manager's Responsibilities During Illness Reporting

## Receive Reports Professionally

Create a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable reporting illness without fear of punishment. Maintain confidentiality and avoid negative reactions that might discourage future reporting.

Managers serve as the frontline defense against foodborne illness transmission in food establishments. Taking employee illness reports seriously and responding appropriately demonstrates commitment to food safety and public health protection. Never pressure ill employees to work, even during staffing shortages.

## Determine Appropriate Action

Based on symptoms, diagnoses, or exposures reported, decide whether exclusion or restriction is required according to the FDA Food Code and local regulations. When in doubt, consult with the health department.

## Document All Reports and Actions

Maintain written records of all illness reports, including date, reported symptoms or conditions, and actions taken. This documentation protects both the establishment and employees.



# Conditions for Returning to Work

Condition	Return Requirement
Vomiting or Diarrhea	Symptom-free for at least 24 hours without medication
Jaundice	Written clearance from health department
Sore Throat with Fever	Medical documentation of negative strep test or antibiotic therapy for 24+ hours
Diagnosed Norovirus	Symptom-free for 48 hours or health department clearance
Diagnosed Hepatitis A	Health department clearance required in all cases
Infected Wound	Properly covered or completely healed

Return-to-work requirements protect both customers and coworkers from potential illness transmission. Managers should never pressure employees to return before meeting these requirements, even during staffing shortages. Premature returns can lead to illness transmission and regulatory violations.





# Maintaining Personal Cleanliness



## Daily Hygiene

Regular bathing or showering before work shifts



## Oral Hygiene

Proper brushing and dental care to prevent oral bacteria transfer



## Hand Maintenance

Clean, trimmed nails and regular moisturizing to prevent cracking



## Odor Control

Use of deodorant (unscented preferred in food service)

Personal cleanliness extends beyond the workplace and should be part of a food handler's daily routine. Good personal hygiene not only prevents food contamination but also projects professionalism and attention to detail to customers and coworkers. Managers should address hygiene issues privately and respectfully when they arise.



# Proper Work Attire for Food Handlers



## Clean Uniforms

Uniforms should be clean, in good repair, and changed daily or whenever they become visibly soiled. Light-colored garments show contamination more easily.



## Hair Restraints

Hairnets, caps, or other effective coverings that completely contain all hair, including beards and mustaches longer than ½ inch.



## Appropriate Footwear

Closed-toe, non-slip shoes that provide protection from falling objects and wet floors. Footwear should be clean and in good condition.



## Jewelry Restrictions

No jewelry except a plain wedding band without stones. Watches, bracelets, earrings, and facial piercings should be removed during food handling.

Proper work attire serves multiple purposes in food safety. It helps prevent physical contamination from hair and jewelry, reduces the transfer of pathogens from street clothes to food, and creates a professional appearance that signals attention to cleanliness standards.

# Habits to Avoid During Food Handling



## Touching Face or Hair

The face harbors numerous bacteria, especially around the eyes, nose, and mouth. Touching these areas and then handling food without washing hands can transfer pathogens directly to food.



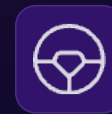
## Eating or Drinking in Prep Areas

Consuming food or beverages in food preparation areas can introduce saliva and foreign food particles into the work environment. Designated break areas should be used instead.



## Smoking or Chewing Tobacco/Gum

These activities introduce hand-to-mouth contact and can result in coughing, increased saliva production, or the risk of foreign objects (gum, cigarette ash) falling into food.



## Uncovered Coughing or Sneezing

Respiratory droplets can travel several feet and contain numerous pathogens. Always turn away from food and cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue or the upper sleeve, never hands.

Breaking these habits requires conscious effort and consistent reinforcement. Managers should provide regular reminders and create a culture where staff members respectfully help each other avoid these potentially dangerous behaviors.



# Cross-Contamination Prevention



Cross-contamination occurs when pathogens transfer from one food or surface to another. Food handlers play a critical role in preventing cross-contamination through proper personal hygiene practices. This includes washing hands between handling different food types, changing gloves appropriately, using dedicated equipment for raw and ready-to-eat foods, and maintaining clean uniforms and work surfaces throughout shifts.

# Creating a Positive Food Safety Culture



A strong food safety culture starts with leadership commitment and is reinforced through consistent practices. When food safety becomes part of your establishment's identity rather than just a set of rules to follow, employees are more likely to internalize and maintain proper hygiene practices even when not directly supervised.

# Key Takeaways: Personal Hygiene

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## Handwashing is Critical

Proper handwashing is the single most important practice in preventing foodborne illness. Follow all 5 steps and wash hands at the appropriate times.

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## Stay Home When Sick

Certain symptoms and diagnoses require exclusion from work to protect public health. Report illness promptly and follow return-to-work protocols.

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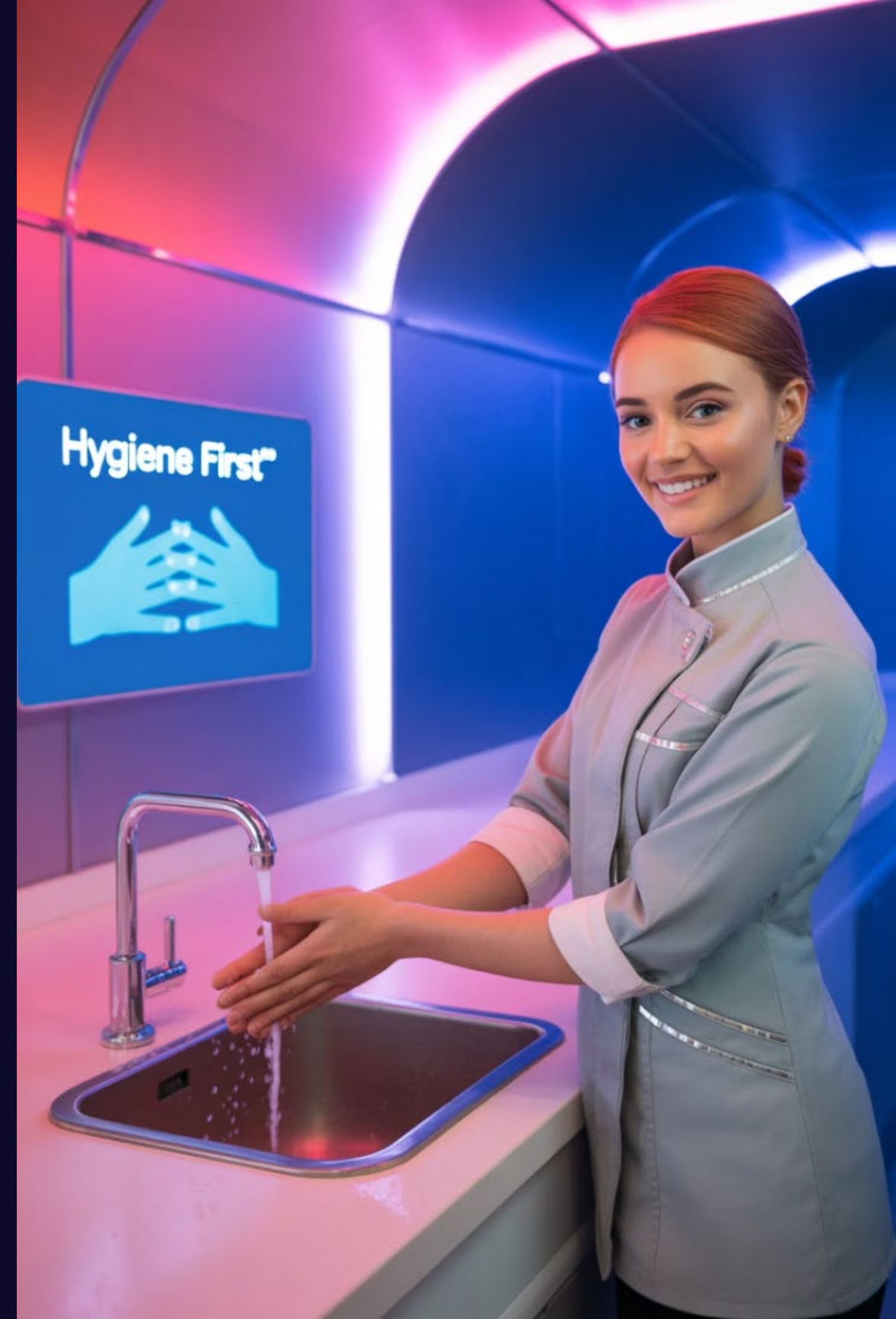
## Maintain Professional Appearance

Clean uniforms, proper hair restraints, and appropriate footwear are essential components of food safety and professionalism.

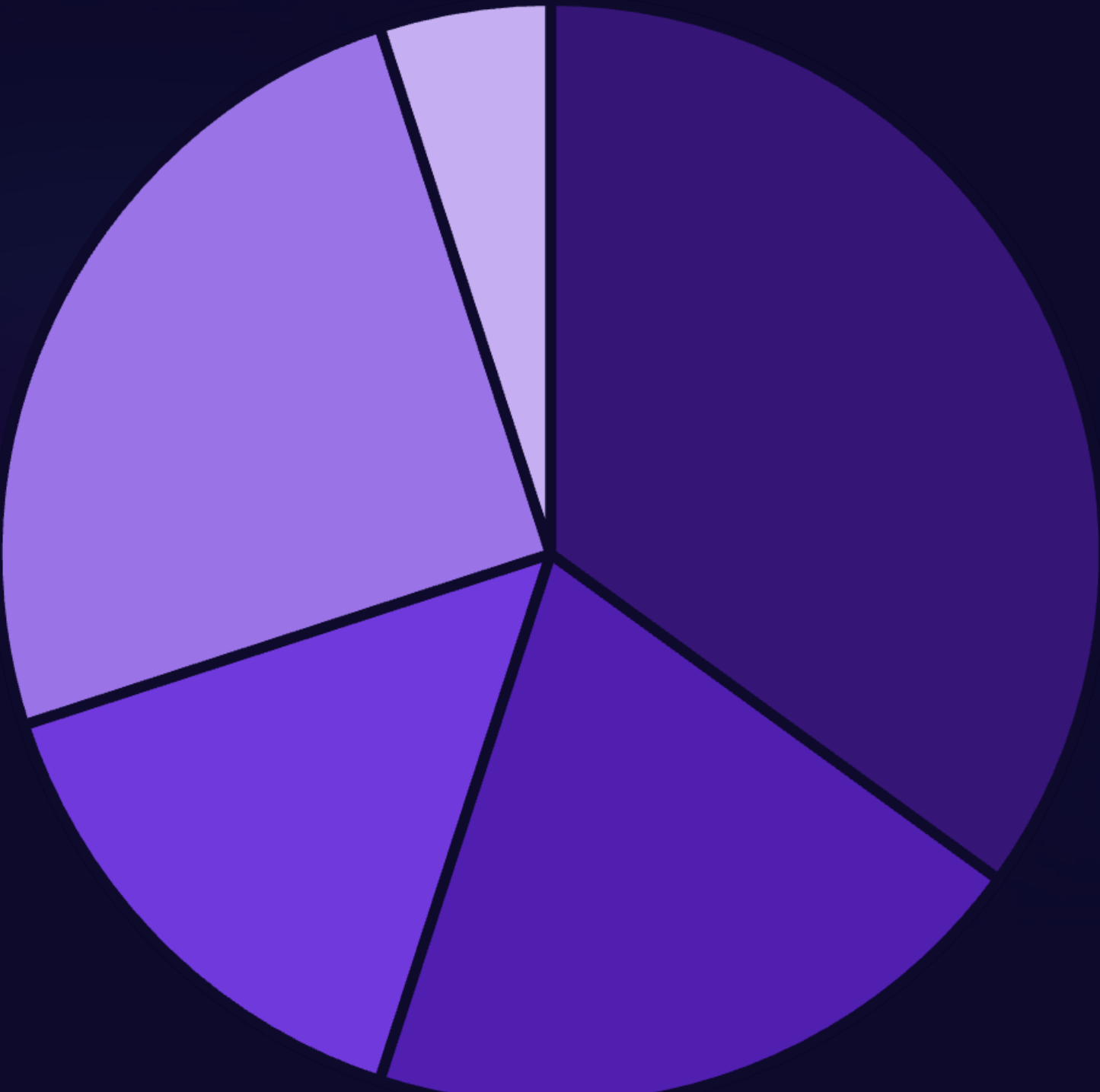
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## Prevent Cross-Contamination

Your personal hygiene practices directly impact your ability to prevent the spread of pathogens between foods and surfaces.



# Monitoring and Enforcement





# Training New Employees



## Initial Orientation

Comprehensive overview of all hygiene policies

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## Hands-on Demonstration

Physical practice of handwashing and glove use



## Competency Verification

Skills assessment before independent work

New employee training should be comprehensive and emphasize the why behind hygiene policies, not just the what. When employees understand how their actions directly impact food safety and public health, they're more likely to consistently follow protocols. Training should include both theoretical knowledge and practical skills demonstration, with verification of competency before allowing independent food handling.

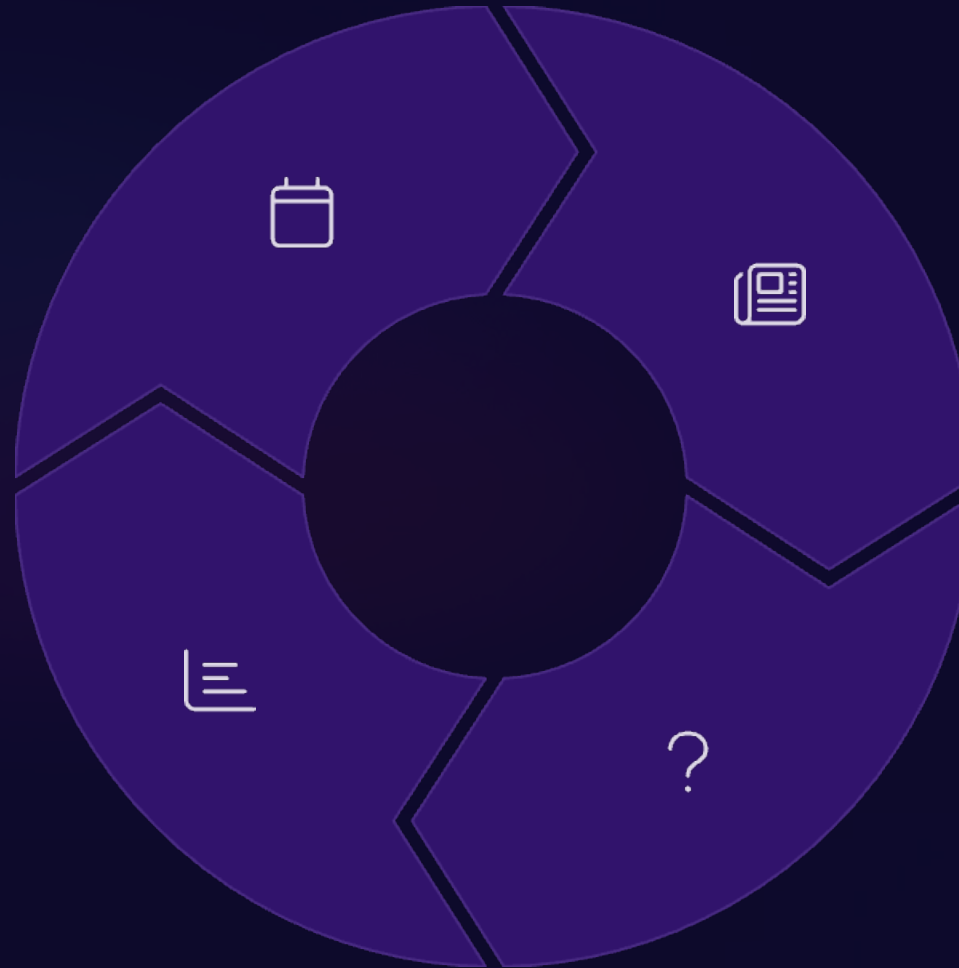
# Refresher Training for Existing Staff

## Regular Schedule

Quarterly refresher sessions on rotation

## Performance Data

Using audit results to target improvement



## Current Topics

Recent outbreaks and emerging pathogens

## Scenario-Based Learning

Real-world problem solving exercises

Even experienced food handlers benefit from regular refresher training. Scheduling quarterly sessions that focus on different aspects of food safety helps prevent complacency and reinforces critical practices. Using data from inspections or internal audits to identify common lapses creates targeted training opportunities that address specific needs in your establishment.

# Managing Special Situations



## Religious Headwear

Religious head coverings can be worn in addition to, not instead of, required hair restraints. Clean, tight-fitting religious coverings may be worn beneath standard hairnets or caps to ensure all hair is properly contained.



## Medical Alert Jewelry

Medical alert bracelets may be permitted with additional precautions. Options include securing them with a tight band or medical tape, covering with a wristband, or relocating to a necklace under clothing when possible.



## Medical Devices

Necessary medical devices like hearing aids, insulin pumps, or prosthetics are generally permitted with appropriate precautions to prevent them from becoming physical contaminants in food.

Special situations require thoughtful accommodation while maintaining food safety standards. When faced with unusual circumstances, consider the primary goal of preventing contamination and find solutions that respect individual needs while protecting public health. Document any accommodations in your policies for consistent application.

# Putting It All Together: A Safe Food Handler

## Personal Responsibility

Each food handler must take personal responsibility for maintaining proper hygiene and following established protocols. This includes regular handwashing, appropriate uniform maintenance, and honest illness reporting.

## Team Accountability

Creating a culture where team members respectfully reinforce food safety practices among peers strengthens compliance and makes proper hygiene a shared value rather than just a set of rules.

## Management Leadership

Managers set the tone through their own behavior, consistent enforcement of standards, and thoughtful response to food safety concerns. When leadership prioritizes hygiene, staff will follow suit.

Food safety is a continuous commitment that requires vigilance and care at every step of food handling. By implementing the personal hygiene practices covered in this presentation, food service workers and managers create multiple barriers against foodborne illness and protect both customers and the reputation of their establishment. Remember that each handwash, each proper glove change, and each responsible decision to stay home when ill contributes to public health protection.