

Non-Bare Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Foods

FACT SHEET #19 DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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Cross contamination to hands from unclean surfaces is one of the leading contributing causes of the spread of germs that lead to human illnesses. The avoidance of direct hand contact with foods that will be immediately consumed is one way to protect the food from contamination.

Creating a clean barrier to the food is what this requirement is all about!

The food establishment operator has choices: either eliminate bare hand contact entirely with ready-to-eat foods, or establish written and practiced procedures for appropriate hand-washing activities. These procedures must be detailed and specific to the tasks performed. They will be approved and verified by staff from the Health Department during inspections. Required changes in procedure or entirely different methods may



have to be implemented if your staff fails to follow your hand washing procedures or observed cross contamination occurs.

A **Ready-To-Eat (RTE)** food is a food that is edible without washing, cooking, or additional preparation by the food handler and is expected to be consumed in that form.

Other means of handling Ready-to-eat foods include:

- Deli paper
- Tongs
- Spatula
- Single-use gloves
- Other utensil

The operator must have *approved written alternative practices and procedures, if bare hand contact cannot be avoided.*

The operator should work with staff from the Health Department to determine appropriate procedures for their processes.

Do not forget proper hand-washing.

Hand-washing must be practiced in addition to utensil and glove use.



Hand sanitizers do not replace the need for handwashing.

If a hand sanitizer is available hand wash soap must also be available for the handwashing process.

The Food Code does not require the use of hand sanitizers.

