

Sustainable Food Safety 201



PEAK SHIFT

CHAPTER 4

The Safe Food Handler

Report the facts. Choose the work status. Protect food with clean hands and suitable barriers.

FDA Food Code 2026, Chapter 2

BASIS: TEACHING FRAMEWORK



Learn the Decision, Then Practice It

01 Learn

Understand employee health and personal hygiene.

02 Compare

Report, restrict, exclude and return are different decisions.

03 Apply

Follow worked examples before choosing an answer.

04 Practice

Use the study guide and separate interactive quiz.

The lesson teaches; the quiz identifies what to revisit.

How an Employee Can Contaminate Food

01 Source

Illness, an infected wound or a contaminated object.

02 Transfer

Hands or gloves touch food, utensils or food-contact surfaces.

03 Exposure

Ready-to-eat food reaches a guest without another kill step.

A carrier can harbor and transmit a pathogen without noticeable symptoms.

2-201; 2-301; 3-301.11; Annex 3 employee-health rationale

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Who Owns Which Responsibility?

Employee	Report required health information to the person in charge.
Permit holder	Require health reporting. 2026 adds a written illness policy; scored 2022+2024 requires verifiable reporting.
Person in charge	Apply controls, notify the authority when required, verify hygiene.
Regulatory authority	Provides required approvals and enforces adopted requirements.

PIC means person in charge. Reporting is not the same as medical diagnosis.

2-103.11(D), (O)-(Q); 2-201.11; 2-501.11

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Recognize the Reportable Symptoms

Digestive symptoms

Vomiting or diarrhea.

Jaundice

Yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes.

Combined symptoms

Sore throat WITH fever.

Infected lesion

Open or draining pus-containing wound; covering rules matter.

Report the symptom and when it began; do not wait to diagnose the cause.

Know the Six Reportable Diagnoses

Two viruses

Norovirus; hepatitis A virus.

Shigella

Shigella species, written as Shigella spp.

STEC

Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli.

Typhoid fever

Caused by Salmonella Typhi.

Other Salmonella

Nontyphoidal Salmonella; not the same as Typhi.

A listed diagnosis must be reported even when the employee feels well.

Restrict and Exclude Are Not Synonyms

RESTRICT

No work with exposed food, clean equipment, utensils, linens or unwrapped single-use items.

EXCLUDE

The person may not work in or enter the food establishment as an employee.

Moving an excluded employee to the dish area does not solve the problem.

Why the Population Served Matters

Highly susceptible

Preschool-age children, older adults or immunocompromised people in qualifying care or service settings.

HSP operation

Examples include a nursing-home kitchen or a child-care food operation serving that population.

HSP means highly susceptible population; the setting is part of the definition.

Vomiting or Diarrhea: Stop the Shift

The report

A prep employee reports diarrhea that began this morning.

Immediate control

Exclude, unless the symptom is from a noninfectious condition.

Not a substitute

Gloves or assignment to dishes do not meet exclusion.

Do not wait for a laboratory diagnosis before applying the symptom rule.

Jaundice Requires Notification

Report	Employee tells the PIC about jaundice and onset.
Notify	PIC notifies the regulatory authority about jaundice.
Exclude	Onset within 7 calendar days triggers exclusion, subject to the medical exception.
Return	Follow the applicable Code criteria and authority approval.

The notification duty is not limited to the first 7 days.

2-201.11(B); 2-201.12(B); 2-201.13(B)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Sore Throat With Fever: Read the Setting

Ordinary restaurant

Restrict the employee from the protected food-related tasks.

HSP operation

Exclude the employee from working in the establishment.

Both symptoms together matter. A symptom-free claim is not the full return process.

Diagnosed but Never Symptomatic

Norovirus / Shigella / STEC

HSP: exclude. Non-HSP: restrict.

Nontyphoidal Salmonella

Restrict in both types of operation.

Hepatitis A / Typhi

Exclusion provisions apply; contact the regulatory authority.

Previously ill employees must meet return criteria, not simply switch categories.

Exposure Is Different From Diagnosis

Norovirus

Listed outbreak or household exposure: past 48 hours.

Shigella / STEC

Listed exposure: past 3 days.

Salmonella Typhi

Listed exposure: past 14 days.

Hepatitis A

Listed exposure: past 30 days.

These are reporting windows after last exposure, not automatic return-to-work timers.

2-201.11(A)(4)-(5); 2-201.12(J); 2-201.13(J)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

The 24-Hour Rule Has a Boundary

Undiagnosed symptoms

For the Code pathway, at least 24 hours without vomiting or diarrhea, or qualifying noninfectious medical documentation.

Diagnosed infection

Use the disease-specific return criteria, including regulatory approval where required.

24 hours is not a universal clearance for all employee illnesses.

Norovirus: Keep Two Authorities Clear

CDC prevention guidance

Food workers stay home while sick and for at least 48 hours after symptoms stop.

Diagnosed Code pathway

Regulatory approval plus specified medical or time criteria; not automatic clearance at 24 hours.

Guidance and the Code are related, but they are not interchangeable quotations.

CDC food-worker guidance; Food Code 2-201.13(D)

BASIS: CODE + CDC GUIDANCE

Protect an Infected Wound by Location

Hand or wrist

Impermeable cover plus a single-use glove.

Exposed arm

Impermeable cover.

Elsewhere on body

Dry, durable, tight-fitting bandage.

Impermeable means liquid cannot pass through the protective cover.

2-201.11(A)(1)(e); 2-201.12(l); 2-201.13(l)

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

A Clean Cut Still Needs Protection

The task

A cook covers a small finger cut before handling exposed food.

The barrier

An impermeable hand, wrist or finger cover needs a single-use glove over it.

The check

Keep the cover secure and the glove intact during the task.

The bandage rule also protects food from a cover coming loose.

Handwashing: One Complete Procedure

01 Wet and apply soap

Use clean, running warm water and cleaning compound.

02 Rub

Vigorously rub 10-15 seconds, including nails and between fingers.

03 Rinse

Rinse thoroughly under clean, running warm water.

04 Dry

Use an approved hand-drying method.

The complete cleaning procedure takes at least 20 seconds.

Wash Time Is Not Water Temperature

20 seconds minimum

Time for the complete hand-cleaning procedure.

85 F minimum supply

2026 model-Code hand sink capability through a mixing valve or combination faucet.

Use warm running water; the adopted local Code may specify a different supply minimum.

The Hand Sink Must Be Ready

Accessible

No boxes, pans or equipment blocking its use.

Dedicated

Use the handwashing sink, not a prep or warewashing sink.

Supplied

Cleaning compound and an approved hand-drying method.

Identified

A handwashing reminder sign visible to employees.

A sink that exists but cannot be used does not support safe work.

2-301.15; 5-205.11; 6-301.11-.14; 6-301.20

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

Wash at the Change in Risk

Before food work

Wash before preparation and before putting on gloves to start a food task.

After personal activities

Toilet use; body contact; coughing, sneezing or tissue use.

After handling

Soiled utensils; service animals or aquatic animals.

After eating or drinking

Also after tobacco use; the closed-beverage exception is narrow.

During task changes

Raw to ready-to-eat; remove soil and prevent cross-contamination.

Gloves do not cancel any required handwashing occasion.

Raw Chicken to Salad: Reset the Task

01 Finish the raw task

Stop using the raw-food gloves and contaminated tools.

02 Wash hands

Complete the handwashing procedure.

03 Restore the setup

Use a clean, sanitized surface and suitable clean utensils.

04 Protect the salad

Use new gloves or a suitable ready-to-eat food utensil.

Changing gloves alone leaves the handwashing requirement unmet.

2-301.14(G)-(I); 3-302.11; 3-304.15; 4-602.11

BASIS: FDA CODE + WORKED EXAMPLE

Hand Antiseptic Is an Addition

Handwashing

Removes soil and contamination through the required procedure.

Hand antiseptic

A suitable product applied only to already-cleaned hands under its conditions of use.

A quick pump of hand sanitizer does not replace washing.

2-301.16; CDC norovirus prevention guidance

BASIS: CODE + CDC GUIDANCE

Ready-to-Eat Does Not Mean Cold

Cooked

Cooked foods that need no further safety cooking.

Raw and prepared

Washed produce intended for eating without cooking.

Service items

Bread, garnishes and ice intended for consumption.

RTE means ready-to-eat: no additional preparation is needed for food safety.

Protect Ready-to-Eat Food From Hands

Use a suitable barrier

Tongs, deli tissue, spatulas, dispensing equipment or single-use gloves.

Keep it clean

A contaminated utensil or glove can still transfer a hazard.

Protect the food

The ordinary rule is no bare-hand contact with exposed RTE food.

Proper handwashing is required even when a barrier is used.

Exceptions Are Narrow, Not Permission

Washing produce

The bare-hand prohibition has an exception during produce washing.

Later cooking

Specific on-premises cooking conditions apply to RTE ingredients added before cooking.

Prior approval

Other bare-hand RTE procedures require regulatory approval and detailed conditions; not for HSP.

The manager cannot approve an exception simply because service is busy.

Single-Use Gloves: Tasks and Exceptions

Begin

Wash when required; use suitable intact gloves.

Change

Both: discard damaged/soiled gloves. Interruptions: scored 2022+2024, discard; 2026, discard if contaminated.

Change tasks

Do not carry contamination into a different task.

Discard

Never wash single-use gloves for reuse.

2026 addition: approved protected-inner-glove use; every condition must hold.

3-304.15(A)-(C); 2-301.14

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

A Phone Changes the Glove Decision

What happened

A sandwich maker in single-layer food gloves handles a phone.

Required reset

Discard contaminated gloves and wash hands before resuming food work.

Food already touched

Discard food contaminated by employee hands; evaluate the exposure.

New gloves protect the next task; they do not repair food already contaminated.

2-301.14(I); 3-304.15; 3-701.11(C)-(D)

BASIS: FDA CODE + WORKED EXAMPLE

Nails and Jewelry: Read the Exceptions

Fingernails

Trimmed, filed and cleanable. Polish or artificial nails require intact gloves when working with exposed food.

Hands and arms

During prep: scored 2022+2024 allows a plain ring; 2026 also allows a qualifying medically necessary device.

Device exception: ADA-covered disability; kept clean and worn to prevent potential contamination.

Hair and Clothing Protect More Than Food

Effective restraints

Keep hair and beard hair from exposed food and protected items.

Clean outer clothing

Prevent contamination of food, equipment, utensils and linens.

Role matters

Minimal-risk service roles have a limited hair-restraint exception.

A specific uniform color or apron routine is restaurant policy, not a universal Code rule.

Eating, Drinking and Tobacco

Designated areas

Eat, drink and use tobacco where contamination cannot result.

Closed beverage exception

Allowed only when handling prevents contamination of hands, container and protected items.

A lid alone does not make careless beverage handling acceptable.

Other Personal Sources Need Controls

Persistent discharges

No work with exposed food or protected items when coughing, sneezing or runny nose causes discharges.

Medicines

Keep identifying labels; store to prevent contamination.

Refrigerated medicine

Keep in an identified, covered, leakproof outer container; inaccessible to children.

Report health concerns; personal storage is not a substitute for employee-health controls.

2-401.12; 7-101.11; 7-207.11-.12; 6-305.11

BASIS: FDA FOOD CODE

A Vomiting Event Needs a Written Response

01 Stop exposure

Keep people and food away from the affected area.

02 Use the procedure

Follow the establishment's written vomiting and diarrhea response.

03 Protect responders

Use the specified protection, equipment and disposal steps.

04 Restore safely

Clean and disinfect affected surfaces as required.

Ordinary table wiping is not an adequate substitute for the event procedure.

Cleaning, Disinfecting and Returning to Use

01 Clean

Remove soil using the required cleaning procedure.

02 Disinfect

Use the appropriate EPA-registered product under label conditions.

03 Follow the label

Respect contact time, dilution and surface-use directions.

04 Food-contact rinse

Use potable water after disinfection unless the label specifies otherwise.

Do not substitute a routine sanitizer bucket for a required disinfecting process.

Four Decisions to Carry Into the Shift

Report

Symptoms, listed diagnoses and qualifying exposures go to the PIC.

Control work

Apply restriction or exclusion for the exact condition and setting.

Prevent transfer

Wash at the trigger and use a clean suitable barrier.

Return correctly

Use the applicable criteria, documentation and authority approval.

Condition + setting + authority = the correct decision.

Study Sources and Next Step

Food Code	2026 edition: employee health, hygiene and hand contact.
Written policies	Illness policy and separate vomiting/diarrhea cleanup procedure.
CDC guidance	Norovirus food-worker prevention; identified separately.
Your next step	Review the learner guide, then use the separate practice quiz.

Original practice builds understanding; it does not predict specific examination items.

Primary references are linked in the study guide and quiz explanations.

BASIS: SOURCE MAP