

CHAPTER 04 / LEARNER STUDY GUIDE

The Safe Food Handler



Protect the next plate.

Match the condition to the correct action.

Employee health, handwashing and food-contact barriers work together. A glove cannot make an excluded employee eligible to work. Learn the controlling fact before choosing the action.

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Use this guide: review the lesson, compare the similar-looking rules, then take the separate interactive quiz. All questions and examples are original. Explanations point back to the teaching; practice scores do not provide certification or guarantee a future exam result.

Memory cues and recall practice: pages 13-15.

LESSON SLIDES 3-8

Report early. Apply the correct control.

Term or role	What it means
PIC	Person in charge of the operation at that time. Applies employee-health controls and required notifications.
Employee	Reports required symptoms, diagnoses and qualifying exposures to the PIC, including relevant dates.
Permit holder	Requires health reporting and a written employee-illness policy.
Conditional employee	Person offered a job whose employment depends on responses to permitted health questions or examinations.
Regulatory authority	Government agency responsible for the establishment; not an owner, district manager or corporate office.

Restriction is not exclusion

Restrict: limit work so there is no risk of disease transmission through food. No work with exposed food, clean equipment, utensils, linens, or unwrapped single-service/single-use items. Wrapping clean silverware is not an acceptable workaround.

Exclude: do not permit the person to work in or enter the establishment as an employee. Moving an excluded employee from food prep to the dish area does not satisfy exclusion.

HSP includes the person AND the setting

Highly susceptible population: preschool-age children, older adults or immunocompromised people obtaining food in qualifying care or service settings. Examples include nursing-home and child-care food operations. One older guest in an ordinary restaurant does not change its category.

Carrier: a person who harbors a pathogen and can transmit it, sometimes without noticeable symptoms. The term alone is not a diagnosis or an automatic exclusion rule.

2026 addition: a separate written employee illness policy, available on request. **Scored 2022 + December 2024:** health reporting, verifiable notification and work-status duties already apply. Written vomiting/diarrhea cleanup was already required (then 2-501.11; **2026:** 2-502.11).

LESSON SLIDES 5, 9-11 AND 16

Symptoms: choose the immediate response

Condition	Model-Code control
Vomiting or diarrhea	Exclude unless from a noninfectious condition. Do not wait for a diagnosis. The noninfectious reinstatement route requires written medical documentation.
Jaundice	Notify the regulatory authority. Exclude when onset was within the last 7 calendar days, unless the specified written medical exception applies.
Sore throat WITH fever	Restrict in a non-HSP restaurant; exclude in an HSP operation.
Open/draining pus-containing wound	Restrict if not properly protected. Covering requirements vary by location; see page 6.

Understand the vocabulary

Jaundice is yellowing of skin or the whites of the eyes. A **lesion** is an affected area of skin, such as an infected wound. A **noninfectious** condition is not caused by an infection; an employee's guess is not the required written medical documentation.

Two restaurant decisions

A cook reports diarrhea this morning: exclude under the stated facts, even if the cook offers to wear gloves. A nursing-home cook reports sore throat and fever: exclude because of the HSP setting. At an ordinary non-HSP restaurant, the latter condition calls for restriction.

Do not confuse: the 7-day jaundice-onset provision limits that exclusion trigger, not the notification duty. Jaundice still requires authority notification outside that window; evaluate diagnoses and applicable criteria.

LESSON SLIDES 6, 12-13

Diagnosis and exposure are different

Six reportable diagnoses: norovirus; hepatitis A virus; Shigella species; Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC); typhoid fever caused by Salmonella Typhi; nontyphoidal Salmonella. Employees report to the PIC; the PIC notifies the regulatory authority. The two Salmonella entries do not have identical controls.

Diagnosed, never symptomatic	Control by setting
Norovirus, Shigella, STEC	HSP: exclude. Non-HSP: restrict.
Nontyphoidal Salmonella	Restrict in both settings.
Hepatitis A; typhoid fever	Exclusion provisions apply.

Asymptomatic means without symptoms. The chart is not a shortcut for an employee whose symptoms recently resolved: use the existing exclusion's return or adjustment criteria. Also report typhoid fever diagnosed within the past 3 months without antibiotic therapy, as determined by a health practitioner.

Qualifying exposure reporting window	After last exposure
Norovirus	Past 48 hours
Shigella or STEC	Past 3 days
Salmonella Typhi	Past 14 days
Hepatitis A virus	Past 30 days

Qualifying exposures include specified implicated-food, confirmed-outbreak and household connections in the Code. They are not every casual contact with an unwell person. A listed exposure without symptoms or diagnosis requires restriction in an HSP operation; its release criteria are separate. **These reporting windows are not return-to-work timers.**

LESSON SLIDES 10-15

Return is a separate decision

Authority / condition	What to remember
Code: undiagnosed vomiting or diarrhea	At least 24 hours without those symptoms OR written medical documentation of a noninfectious cause under the specified pathway.
Code: diagnosed norovirus	Full release requires regulatory approval plus specified medical or time criteria. The time route is more than 48 hours after becoming asymptomatic, or after diagnosis if never symptomatic.
CDC norovirus guidance	Food workers stay home while sick and for at least 48 hours after symptoms stop. This is guidance, not a replacement quotation for the Code.

Do not use one number for every illness

A diagnosed infection has disease-specific requirements. Required authority approval is separate from medical documentation. Some non-HSP cases can move from exclusion to restriction before unrestricted return; **restriction is not full clearance**. Jaundice, hepatitis A and typhoid fever also require the applicable authority-led return pathway.

For sore throat with fever, reinstatement requires written medical documentation of a specified pathway: more than 24 hours of antibiotic therapy for *Streptococcus pyogenes*, a negative throat specimen culture, or a practitioner's determination that the employee is free of that infection. Do not self-prescribe treatment.

A clock is not an approval

A diagnosed employee saying "I feel better" is not enough. Verify the diagnosis, symptom history, operation type, required medical evidence, regulatory approval and locally adopted requirements. Restaurant policy may be stricter; identify it as policy.

LESSON SLIDES 16-17 AND 29-30

Wounds, nails, jewelry and clothing

Open/draining infected wound	Required protection
Hand or wrist	Impermeable cover AND a single-use glove over it.
Exposed arm	Impermeable cover.
Other body area	Dry, durable, tight-fitting bandage.

Impermeable means liquid cannot pass through. A glove alone does not replace the cover on an infected hand wound. A properly covered wound can remove that wound-related restriction; it does not remove an unrelated illness exclusion.

A separate provision requires a single-use glove over an impermeable bandage, finger cot or finger stall on the wrist, hand or finger when working with exposed food. This applies even when the cut is not infected.

Personal hygiene	Objective rule
Fingernails	Trimmed, filed, cleanable and not rough. Polish/artificial nails require intact gloves when working with exposed food.
Jewelry during prep	No hand/arm jewelry except a plain ring or a qualifying medically necessary device (p. 16).
Hair and clothing	Effective hair/beard restraints and clean outer clothing. Limited hair-restraint exception for roles presenting minimal contamination risk.

Practice versus rule: a uniform color, designated apron routine or stricter no-ring policy may be restaurant policy. Do not confuse it with the Code's specific exceptions.

2026 addition: the conditional medically necessary device allowance (p. 16). **Scored 2022 + December 2024:** the hand/arm-jewelry exception during food preparation is a plain ring. The 2026 device route requires an ADA-covered disability, medical necessity, cleanliness and wear that prevents potential contamination.

LESSON SLIDES 18-20

Wash completely at the correct sink

Step	Understand the action
Wet and apply soap	Clean, running warm water; apply cleaning compound.
Rub	Vigorously rub 10-15 seconds, including nails and between fingers.
Rinse	Thoroughly rinse under clean, running warm water.
Dry	Use an approved method, such as individual disposable towels or a suitable hand-drying device.

Two different measurements

At least 20 seconds: complete hand-cleaning procedure.

85 F minimum: 2026 model-Code hand sink water-supply capability through a mixing valve or combination faucet. It is not a hand-sterilizing temperature. Older/local editions may differ.

The sink has to work as a hand sink

Keep it accessible and supplied with cleaning compound and an approved drying method. Provide the required visible handwashing reminder sign. Where disposable towels are used, provide a waste receptacle. Do not store utensils in the sink or block it with a cart.

Use the designated handwashing sink, not a food-preparation or warewashing sink. Avoid recontaminating washed hands at the faucet or door; a disposable towel can help where needed. Restoring access and supplies is part of the correction when a station cannot support the required wash.

LESSON SLIDES 21-23

Wash when the risk changes

Trigger	Why it matters
Before preparing food	Includes before donning gloves to initiate food work.
After using the toilet	Potential fecal contamination requires the full wash.
After touching body parts	Includes hair or face; clean hands/arms have a limited exception.
After contaminated objects	Examples: soiled equipment, phone contact or other contaminating activity.
From raw to RTE tasks	Interrupt transfer to food that will receive no further safety step.

Worked transition: chicken prep to salad assembly

Remove the raw-task gloves. Wash hands. Use a clean, sanitized work surface and suitable clean tools. Protect the ready-to-eat salad with a new glove or appropriate utensil. A new glove on a dirty hand, or clean hands at a dirty board, leaves a transfer route open.

Hand antiseptic is supplemental

A hand antiseptic, often called hand sanitizer, is used only on already-cleaned hands under its approved conditions. It does not replace washing after a contaminating task. CDC warns that hand sanitizer alone does not work well against norovirus. Surface sanitizer is not a substitute hand product.

Additional triggers: coughing, sneezing, tissue or handkerchief use; handling service animals or aquatic animals; eating, drinking, tobacco use; and other activities that contaminate hands. Visible dirt or coughing onto a hand is not required. The closed-beverage exception applies only when its handling conditions prevent contamination. Animal-handling permission is a separate rule.

LESSON SLIDES 24-28

Ready-to-eat protection and gloves

RTE means ready-to-eat: no further preparation is needed for food safety. It is not a temperature category. Cooked foods, washed produce intended for raw consumption, bread, garnishes and drinking ice can be RTE.

Ordinary rule	Apply it correctly
No bare-hand contact with exposed RTE food	Use suitable tongs, deli tissue, spatulas, dispensing equipment or single-use gloves.
Single-use gloves	One task; approved inner-glove exception: p. 16. Discard if damaged, soiled or contaminated. Never wash.
Contamination before a timer expires	Change immediately as required. No fixed glove timer excuses a contaminated glove.

Narrow exceptions are not manager discretion

The Code allows contact during produce washing. A specific exception covers an RTE ingredient added before on-premises cooking: with raw animal food, reach the required animal-food cook; without raw animal food, all parts reach at least **145 F**. This does not cover an uncooked garnish added afterward.

Other bare-hand RTE procedures require prior regulatory-authority approval and all specified safeguards, and are not permitted for HSP operations. A manager's permission or an employee's clean hands alone is not this approval.

Correct the next task AND the exposed food

Phone contact while making sandwiches: remove contaminated gloves, wash, and use a clean suitable barrier. Discard food contaminated through employee hands under the specific disposition rule. Changing gloves does not repair food already contaminated.

Scored 2022 + December 2024: one task only; discard single-use gloves when damaged or soiled, or when interruptions occur. **2026:** the interruption clause adds contamination; the protected-inner-glove route is also new and requires regulatory-authority approval and every condition on p. 16. Neither change permits contaminated gloves or omission of required handwashing.

LESSON SLIDES 31-32

Personal habits and personal storage

Situation	Food Code distinction
Eating, drinking and tobacco	Use designated areas where contamination cannot result.
Closed beverage	May be used under conditions preventing contamination of hands, container and protected food-related items.
Persistent discharges	No work with exposed food, clean equipment/utensils/linens or unwrapped single-use items when persistent cough, sneezing or runny nose causes discharges.
Medicines	Keep legible identifying manufacturer labels; locate to prevent contamination.
Refrigerated medicine	In a food refrigerator: keep its package inside a covered, leakproof outer container identified for medicine storage, inaccessible to children. Prevent contamination of food and related items.

A lid is not the whole beverage rule

An employee touches the mouth-contact area of a cup and returns to handling a garnish. The issue is the contaminated hand route, even if the cup has a lid. Wash when contamination occurs. A designated drink shelf or required cup style can be a restaurant procedure implementing the rule, rather than the Code's exact universal requirement.

Do not combine unrelated controls

Properly storing medicine does not prove the employee is eligible to work. Employee-health reporting and restriction/exclusion decisions still apply. Similarly, not every cough is the vomiting-and-diarrhea exclusion rule; identify the actual condition and protected tasks.

LESSON SLIDES 33-35

Respond to contamination, then restore

The establishment needs **written procedures** for vomiting or diarrheal events involving discharge onto surfaces. The procedure must minimize spread and exposure of employees, guests, food and surfaces. Protect the area, notify the PIC, and use the specified responder protection, equipment and disposal steps. This is not routine table wiping.

Restoration step	Key distinction
Clean	Remove soil through the required process.
Disinfect	Use an appropriate EPA-registered product under its label directions. EPA means Environmental Protection Agency.
Observe conditions	Follow dilution, contact time, surface suitability and any required testing. Do not invent a universal bleach recipe.
Food-contact rinse	After disinfection, rinse with potable water unless the EPA-registered label specifies otherwise. Potable means safe for drinking.

The 2026 Code includes Part 4-10 disinfection provisions. A routine sanitizer bucket is not automatically adequate for the event. Complete required restoration before reuse. Managing the sick employee is a separate employee-health decision.

The chapter in four decisions

Report relevant symptoms, diagnoses and exposures.

Control work with the correct restriction or exclusion.

Prevent transfer using handwashing and suitable barriers.

Return correctly with applicable criteria, documentation and approval.

Primary sources and an efficient review

This chapter uses objective model-Code provisions and explicitly labeled public-health guidance. The model Code does not automatically become the law in every jurisdiction. Verify the adopted version, local requirements and public-health directions for your operation.

1. FDA Food Code 2026

[Open the 2026 FDA Food Code](#)

Definitions: 1-201.10. Responsibilities and employee health: 2-103 and 2-201. Hygiene: 2-301 through 2-402. Policy: 2-501.11; cleanup: 2-502.11. Hand contact and gloves: 3-301.11 and 3-304.15. Contaminated food: 3-701.11. Hand sinks: 5-202.12, 5-205.11 and 6-301. Medicines: 7-207.

2. Disinfection: 2026 Food Code

[Open 2026 Food Code Part 4-10](#)

Part 4-10 carries forward disinfection provisions introduced in 2024. Follow the current Code and the EPA-registered product's label directions.

3. CDC norovirus food-worker guidance

[Open the CDC food-worker fact sheet](#)

Supports norovirus prevention and the guidance to stay home while sick and at least 48 hours after symptoms stop. It is identified as guidance, not substituted for disease-specific Code clearance criteria.

Use missed answers to find the missing distinction

For each missed question, name the condition, the population/setting, the authority and the action. Return to the slide and guide page in its explanation. Explain why each alternative fails before retrying. Do not memorize only the letter.

Original Peak Shift study material. Public primary-source references checked during preparation on September 23, 2026. Questions are not reproduced examination items and do not predict any individual exam.

CHAPTER 04 | REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE

Employee Health: Facts Before a Clock

REPORT first. Then check SYMPTOMS + DIAGNOSIS + SETTING.

Exclude means no work or entry as an employee. Restrict means no duties that risk transmission through exposed food, clean food-contact items, linens or unwrapped single-use items. Neither means "just add gloves."

Vomiting or diarrhea	Exclude in both HSP and non-HSP operations unless the specified noninfectious-condition exception applies. A pathogen diagnosis is not required before applying this symptom rule.
Sore throat WITH fever	Non-HSP: restrict. HSP: exclude. Keep both symptoms together; do not replace this rule with a generic "any cough" rule.
Diagnosed; NEVER symptomatic	For norovirus, Shigella or STEC: non-HSP restrict; HSP exclude. For nontyphoidal Salmonella: restrict in both. STEC means Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli.
Jaundice / hepatitis A / typhoid	PIC notifies the regulatory authority for jaundice or a listed diagnosis. Jaundice beginning within the last 7 calendar days triggers exclusion unless the specified written medical exception applies. Hepatitis A and typhoid have their own exclusion and return pathways; do not use the generic 24-hour route.

Use it on shift: Two employees have a confirmed Shigella diagnosis and have never had symptoms. The restaurant employee is restricted; the nursing-home food employee is excluded. If either has vomiting or diarrhea, the symptom-based exclusion rule controls instead.

Cover the answers. Explain the reason.

Does "carrier" alone decide exclusion? No. Establish the actual diagnosis, symptom history and setting.

Can a recently ill diagnosed worker use the never-symptomatic row? No. Follow the adjustment or return pathway for that worker's existing exclusion.

Review: earlier guide pp. 2-5. **Sources:** 1-201.10; 2-201.11(B); 2-201.12(A)-(I); 2-201.13. Baseline model rules; local requirements also apply.
2026 FDA Food Code

CHAPTER 04 | REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE

24 Hours Is Not Universal Clearance

A clock needs a condition, a starting point and the right approval.

These are selected return-to-work routes, not all medical alternatives. Do not confuse full return with moving from exclusion to restriction. Do not confuse incubation, exposure reporting, and return-to-work clocks.

Undiagnosed vomiting / diarrhea	Food Code route: at least 24 hours without symptoms, OR written medical documentation that the symptom came from a noninfectious condition. Do not apply this shortcut to a listed diagnosed infection.
Diagnosed norovirus	Full return needs regulatory approval plus an applicable route: written medical clearance, more than 48 hours after becoming asymptomatic, or more than 48 hours after diagnosis if never symptomatic. The time route is not automatic permission.
Diagnosed Shigella / STEC	Full return needs regulatory approval plus the applicable medical-testing route, or more than 7 days after becoming asymptomatic, or more than 7 days after diagnosis if never symptomatic. These are not the generic 24-hour illness route.
CDC norovirus guidance	Stay home while ill and for at least 48 hours after symptoms stop. This is public-health guidance, distinct from the Code's conditional return provisions. In actual work, follow the adopted rule, public-health direction and applicable stricter policy.

Use it on shift: A diagnosed norovirus worker at a non-HSP restaurant has been symptom-free for 24 hours. Under the Code, the exclusion can shift to restriction under its criteria; that is not unrestricted food work. In an HSP operation, exclusion remains until its return criteria are met.

Cover the answers. Explain the reason.

Can a diagnosed worker simply return after 24 hours? No. Diagnosis-specific criteria and required approval still apply.

What about sore throat with fever, typhoid or NTS? Use their separate pathways. NTS means nontyphoidal Salmonella. Do not substitute the noro or Shigella clock. See guide p. 5 and the linked Code.

Review: earlier guide pp. 4-5. **Sources:** 2-201.13(A)-(H). Shigella/STEC medical route specifies test conditions; time routes summarized here retain authority approval.

[FDA full return criteria](#) | [CDC guidance: norovirus](#)

CHAPTER 04 | REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE

HSP: What Changes, What Does Not

More vulnerable people + qualifying service setting = HSP.

HSP means highly susceptible population. Examples include preschool-age children in child care and older residents in assisted living. Ordinary restaurant safety controls still apply; HSP provisions add protections.

Same basic limits	HSP does not create a different ordinary 41 F cold-holding or 135 F hot-holding number. Safe sources, hygiene, contamination prevention, cooking and cooling still matter.
Different employee control	Sore throat with fever: restrict in non-HSP; exclude in HSP. Never-symptomatic diagnosed norovirus, Shigella or STEC: restrict in non-HSP; exclude in HSP. See the prior pages before deciding return.
Different menu boundary	Do not serve prohibited raw or partially cooked animal foods or raw seed sprouts to HSP consumers. A warning or guest request does not waive that prohibition. A lawful non-HSP raw-service route has its own conditions.
Eggs and ready-to-eat contact	Use pasteurized eggs/products for the specified uncooked recipes and pooled-egg preparations. Listed single-serving, baking and HACCP exceptions have conditions. HSP raw eggs cannot use time alone. The approved bare-hand RTE alternative for non-HSP operations is not available in HSP operations.

Use it on shift: An assisted-living kitchen makes uncooked Caesar dressing for residents. Use pasteurized eggs or egg products for that recipe. A sign warning of raw eggs and a cold refrigerator do not replace the required ingredient protection.

Cover the answers. Explain the reason.

Does one older diner make a restaurant HSP? No. Both the people and the qualifying service setting matter.

Is HSP a blanket ban on every raw shell egg in the building? No. The preparation and listed exceptions matter. It is not permission for undercooked eggs or uncontrolled pooling.

Review: earlier guide pp. 2-5, 9. **Sources:** 1-201.10; 2-201.12-.13; 3-301.11; 3-501.16/.19(D); 3-801.11. Detailed egg conditions also appear in Chapter 8.

2026 FDA Food Code

CHAPTER 04 | 2026 CLARIFICATIONS

2026 Clarifications

Read with pages 2, 6 and 9. Existing illness-clearance rules still apply.

Written Employee Illness Policy

- The permit holder must provide a written employee illness policy, available upon request.
- Include procedures addressing reporting and compliance for food employees, conditional employees and the person in charge, including required reporting to the regulatory authority.
- Cover diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat with fever, jaundice, and infected wounds or cuts.
- Cover diagnoses of norovirus, hepatitis A, Shigella, typhoid fever, nontyphoidal Salmonella, and Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC).
- Cover exclusion, restriction and reinstatement after symptom or disease resolution. This is not automatic clearance.
- The illness policy (2-501.11) is separate from written vomiting/diarrhea cleanup procedures (2-502.11).

Medically Necessary Devices

- Jewelry is prohibited on hands and arms during food preparation, except a plain ring and the following conditional device exception.
- An individual with an ADA-covered disability may be allowed a medically necessary device if it can be kept clean and worn to prevent potential contamination.
- This is not blanket permission for medical-information bracelets, watches or other jewelry.

Protected Inner-Glove Process

- Ordinarily, single-use gloves serve one task only. Continued inner-glove use requires regulatory-authority approval and a task-specific loose exterior glove protecting the interior single-use glove.
- Removal and discard must prevent contamination or exposure of the hands and inner glove.
- The exterior glove must fall off by gravity without touching the inner glove or being peeled off.
- If the exterior glove is single-use, immediately discard it in an appropriate waste container after use.
- After removal, the inner glove must be intact, without tears or punctures, and free of contamination.
- Discard damaged or soiled single-use gloves, and gloves contaminated during interruptions. Required handwashing remains; never wash single-use gloves for reuse.

Scored 2022 + December 2024 comparison: the separate written illness policy, conditional device allowance and approved protected-inner-glove route above are 2026 additions.

The scored baseline retains health reporting, verifiable notification and work-status duties; written vomiting/diarrhea cleanup was already required (then 2-501.11). Its hand/arm-jewelry exception is a plain ring.

Scored glove rule: one task; discard when damaged or soiled, or when interruptions occur. The 2026 interruption wording adds contamination. Required handwashing and all safeguards above remain.

Policy / cleanup: PDF pp. 71-72 | Devices: PDF p. 70 | Gloves: PDF pp. 86-87