Food Code Edition Guide

What the 2026 FDA Food Code requires, and what changed from the 2022 Code and 2024 Supplement. Version 2, November 2026.

How the practice quizzes are scored

- Peak Shift practice quizzes are scored on the **FDA Food Code 2026** (fda.gov/media/194741).
- The earlier edition used for comparison is the 2022 FDA Food Code with its December 2024 Supplement. The 2026 edition includes the changes listed in that Supplement. (Preface 5, PDF p. 11)
- **Check with your exam provider.** We have not confirmed that exam providers have moved their exams to the 2026 edition. Ask your exam provider which edition your exam uses.
- **Your local code governs your kitchen.** The Food Code is a model code. Its provisions are not federal requirements until they are adopted, and they are written for adoption at all levels of government. Follow the code your jurisdiction has adopted. (Preface 2(A), PDF p. 9)
- "PDF p." means the page number in FDA's PDF file of the 2026 Food Code, not the printed page number. Each citation links to that page.

1. Written employee illness policy

2026 (scored answer): The permit holder must provide a written employee illness policy, available on request. It must cover reporting and compliance by food employees, conditional employees and the person in charge, and required reporting to the regulatory authority, for: illness symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat with fever, jaundice, infected wounds or cuts); diagnoses (norovirus, hepatitis A virus, *Shigella* spp., typhoid fever, non-typhoidal *Salmonella*, Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*); and exclusion, restriction and reinstatement.

Changed from 2022/2024: New section in 2026. In 2022, § 2-501.11 was the vomiting and diarrhea clean-up rule. That rule is now § 2-502.11, with the same written-procedure requirement.

Sources: § 2-501.11, PDF p. 71; § 2-501.11(B)(1)-(3), PDF p. 72; § 2-502.11, PDF p. 72; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 717

2. Jewelry and medically necessary devices

2026 (scored answer): Food employees may not wear jewelry on their arms and hands while preparing food. Exceptions: a plain ring, such as a wedding band; and an individual with a disability covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act may be allowed to wear a medically necessary device that can be kept clean and worn in a way that prevents potential contamination.

Changed from 2022/2024: 2022 allowed only a plain ring and named medical information jewelry as prohibited. The medically necessary device exception is new.

Sources: § 2-303.11(A)-(C), PDF p. 70; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 717

3. Single-use gloves

2026 (scored answer): Single-use gloves are for one task only. New: if approved, an employee may keep using an interior single-use glove protected by a task-specific, loose-fitting exterior glove, when (1) removal prevents contamination of the hands and interior glove, (2) the exterior glove comes off by gravity without touching the interior glove or being peeled off, (3) a single-use exterior glove is discarded immediately after use, and (4) the interior glove stays intact, with no tears or punctures, and free of contamination. Gloves in use must be discarded “when damaged or soiled, or contaminated when interruptions occur in the operation.” The slash-resistant glove rule is now a Priority Foundation item.

Changed from 2022/2024: The approved interior-glove option, ¶ (B), is new. The discard rule moved to ¶ (C); 2022 read “discarded when damaged or soiled, or when interruptions occur in the operation.” The slash-resistant rule moved from ¶ (B) to ¶ (D) and changed from Core to Priority Foundation.

Sources: § 3-304.15(A)-(B), PDF p. 86; § 3-304.15(B)-(D), PDF p. 87; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 718

4. Cooling cooked TCS food

2026 (scored answer): Cool cooked time/temperature control for safety (TCS) food from 135°F to 70°F within 2 hours, and to 41°F or less within 6 hours total. Use one or more listed methods to meet those limits. The list now includes placing the food at a depth of no more than 2 inches. Separately, ¶ (C) allows, if approved, cooling cooked TCS food filled no more than 2 inches deep, held uncovered, in a refrigeration unit that maintains 41°F or less ambient air and has an electronic system that continuously monitors time and ambient air temperature. ¶ (C) does not apply to food cooled under ¶ 3-401.14(B) (non-continuous cooking), Subparagraph 3-502.12(D)(2)(e) (a reduced oxygen packaging process), or § 3-501.19 (time as a public health control).

Changed from 2022/2024: The 2-hour and 6-hour limits are the same as in 2022. The 2-inch depth method and the approved alternative in ¶ (C) are new.

Sources: § 3-501.14(A), PDF p. 98; § 3-501.14(A)(2), PDF p. 99; § 3-501.15(A)(7), (C), PDF p. 99; § 3-501.15(C)(3)(a)-(b), PDF p. 100; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 719

5. Other chemical sanitizers

2026 (scored answer): A chemical sanitizer other than chlorine, iodine or a quaternary ammonium compound must have a minimum temperature of 75°F, unless the EPA-registered label use instructions state otherwise. A sanitizer generated by an on-site device must be used as specified in ¶¶ (A)-(E).

Changed from 2022/2024: 2022 ¶ (E) said only to apply these sanitizers according to the EPA-registered label. The 75°F default is new. The on-site device cross-reference grew from ¶¶ (A)-(D) to ¶¶ (A)-(E).

Sources: § 4-501.114(E)-(F), PDF p. 133; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 720

6. Manufacturer cooking instructions

2026 (scored answer): Packaged food from a food processing plant falls into three cases. (A) If the manufacturer says the food has not been processed to control pathogens as required in 21 CFR 117.136, cook it to a time and temperature appropriate for the hazard. (B) If it carries USDA safe handling instructions (9 CFR 317.2(l) or 381.125(b)), cook it according to those directions or as specified in § 3-401.11. (C) Other packaged food that bears manufacturer’s cooking instructions “should be cooked” before it is offered as ready-to-eat, unless the instructions say it may be eaten without cooking. Plant foods cooked for hot holding: 135°F, or as specified under § 3-401.15.

Changed from 2022/2024: 2022 said commercially packaged food bearing cooking instructions “shall be cooked according to those instructions.” 2026 splits the rule into ¶¶ (A)-(C), and ¶ (C) uses “should.” § 3-401.13 now cross-references § 3-401.15.

Sources: § 3-401.15(A)-(C), PDF p. 95; § 3-401.13, PDF p. 94; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 719

7. Commercially packaged dehydrated food

2026 (scored answer): Food dehydrated and packaged by a food processing plant, where the manufacturer gives rehydration information, should be rehydrated according to those instructions.

Changed from 2022/2024: New section in 2026.

Sources: § 3-501.10, PDF p. 97; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 719

8. Toilet room receptacles

2026 (scored answer): All toilet rooms must have a covered receptacle.

Changed from 2022/2024: 2022 required a covered receptacle for sanitary napkins only in toilet rooms used by females.

Sources: § 5-501.17, PDF p. 158; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 720

9. Carried forward from the 2024 Supplement

These were already in the December 2024 Supplement to the 2022 Code, and they remain in the 2026 Code:

- The person in charge maintains active managerial control of foodborne illness risk factors. (§ 2-103.11, PDF p. 54)
- Employees are aware of food defense and report suspicious activity to the person in charge. (§ 2-103.11(R), PDF p. 56)
- The person in charge can explain steps taken to prevent intentional adulteration. (§ 2-102.11(C)(18), PDF p. 53)
- Reinstatement after *Shigella* spp., Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* or non-typhoidal *Salmonella* can rely on 2 consecutive negative results from a validated test, run by a laboratory accredited or certified to handle clinical specimens. (§ 2-201.13(E)(1), (F)(1), PDF p. 64; § 2-201.13(G)(1), PDF p. 65)
- Rules for refilling returnable containers. (§ 3-304.17, PDF p. 87)
- Disinfection of equipment and utensils (new Part 4-10). (§ 4-1001.11, PDF p. 144)
- A written food safety management system is required within four years of the regulatory authority's adoption of the Code, except for operations the regulatory authority deems minimal risk. (§ 8-201.15, PDF p. 183)

The 2026 Summary of Changes also lists these items, because it compares 2026 with the 2022 Code. (Summary of Changes, PDF p. 717)

10. Renumbered, not changed

Clean-up of vomiting and diarrheal events moved from § 2-501.11 (2022) to § 2-502.11 (2026). A new section number alone does not change the answer. (§ 2-502.11, PDF p. 72; Summary of Changes, PDF p. 718)

Peak Shift is independent and is not sponsored or endorsed by the National Restaurant Association, the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation, or Always Food Safe. This guide summarizes parts of the FDA Food Code 2026 for study. It is not legal advice, and it does not list every change between editions. The Food Code text and your local adopted code control.