

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

WINTER

2023 ISSUE

Bare Hands Contact

Did you know that except when washing fruits and vegetables, food employees may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as a deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment. Most foodborne outbreaks involve the fecal-oral route. The biggest contributor to spreading these agents is through bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food products. Due to poor or nonexistent handwashing policies, employees of food service establishments put the public at risk. In addition, infected cuts, burns, or boils on hands can also result in contamination of foods ready to eat.

The Health Department requires two methods of preventing the spread of foodborne disease by this mode of transfer:

- Prohibiting food workers from preparing food when they are sick with infectious diseases.
- Requiring thorough and frequent handwashing.

Most people do not wash their hands frequently enough. And not all employees are honest about the condition of their health. As a final barrier, bare-hand contact with exposed ready-to-eat food is prohibited.



For additional information, visit:
www.fda.gov/food



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How To Handle Eggs Safely

The USDA recommends storing eggs in a refrigerator at about 40°F to reduce the chances that any bacteria on the shell will multiply and cause a risk of illness. Store them in the refrigerator as soon as they are delivered. Proper refrigeration, cooking, and handling should prevent most egg safety problems. People can enjoy eggs and any dishes containing eggs if these safe handling guidelines are followed:

- Wash utensils, equipment, and work areas with hot, soapy water before and after contact with eggs
- Don't keep eggs out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours.
- Raw eggs and other ingredients, combined according to recipe directions, should be cooked immediately or refrigerated and cooked within 24 hours.
- Always cook eggs until both the white and yolk are firm.
- Casseroles and other dishes containing eggs should be cooked to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F. Use a food thermometer to be sure.
- Serve cooked eggs and dishes containing eggs immediately after cooking, or place in shallow containers for quick cooling and refrigerate at once for later use. Use within 3 to 4 days.



For more information visit: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/>

Unclean Soda Fountains

A recent study showcased the results of microbiological tests of soda fountain beverages. While many people do not consider beverages, including soda and ice, as “food”, they are still one way that illness can be transmitted. Researchers tested 90 beverages, including soda and water, from 20 self-service and 10 employee dispensed soda fountains. The results showed that Coliform bacteria were found in 48% of the beverages. In addition, 11% of the beverages contained E. coli, and 17% had Chryseobacterium meningosepticum (which could sicken newborns or adults with weakened immune systems). The study didn't determine how the bacteria got inside the beverage machines. Possible causes could include dispensing the beverage with unclean hands or using wet rags to wipe down the machine.

This study is an important reminder of the necessity to properly clean and sanitize ice machines and beverage dispensing machines. Simply soaking the nozzles in soda water, a common practice, will not remove any build-up of debris, and will not kill any bacteria present on the nozzles. You must wash, rinse and sanitize the nozzles on a routine basis, just like you would do with any other food contact surface.



2023 Food Handler Schedule

January 5	9:00 AM	3:30 PM
January 19	9:00 AM	3:30 PM*
February 2	9:00 AM	3:30 PM
February 16	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM
March 2	9:00 AM	3:30 PM
March 16	9:00 AM	3:30 PM*
April 6	9:00 AM	3:30 PM
April 20	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM
May 4	9:00 AM	3:30 PM
May 18	9:00 AM	3:30 PM*
June 1	9:00 AM	3:30 PM
June 15	9:00 AM*	3:30 PM

*Spanish only.

Pre-registration is required. Register by calling 972-237-8055.

Food Handler Class

A food handler card or certificate issued by accredited providers is required to work in the food industry in Texas and the City of Grand Prairie. Employers must ensure that all employees have a food handler card or certificate within 60 days of hiring. The cards or certificates must be available for inspection at all times. Allowing employees to work without a food handler card or certificate is a violation of state laws and the City Code of Ordinances.

Food handler cards or certificates obtained through accredited providers are not required to be transferred to a city of Grand Prairie food handler card.

The Environmental Quality Division offers food handler classes on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month for employees who work in the food industry. One class, the 3rd Thursday, is offered in Spanish. To attend a class you must bring an identification and pay a fee of \$15. Call 972-237-8055 to register or obtain additional information

For more information visit: www.gptx.org/Departments/Public-Health-and-Environmental-Quality

Take the Get Fit GP pledge for a healthy lifestyle and sign up for a chance to win monthly prizes, www.gptx.org/getfitgp.



Handling Fruits and Vegetables

Are you concerned about the potential for E. coli, salmonella, or other bacteria poisoning only when it comes to meats, fish, and poultry? Did you know the same risks are present in fruits and vegetables? It can be argued that fruits and vegetables are even more dangerous due to the extensive handling they encounter.

To protect yourself and others examine, separate, clean.

Examine: Be sure to thoroughly examine every piece of produce before purchasing. Purchase fresh-looking produce. Don't buy any produce that is bruised, shriveled, moldy or slimy. Even if you trim off the decayed area, rapid deterioration will likely spread to the salvaged area. Dispose of any produce in your possession that has any sign of spoilage.

Separate: Fruits and vegetables should be stored and prepared separately from animal products. This will reduce any chance of cross-contamination. Equipment and utensils, used to store and prepare produce must be cleaned and sanitized before use; to ensure no cross-contamination occurs.

Clean: Besides ensuring that equipment and utensils are clean, the produce itself should be cleaned before preparation. Washing fruits and vegetables require nothing more than scrubbing under running, cold, drinkable water (use a produce brush -- when a brush is appropriate). For additional information visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/food-safety>



Clean Prairie recognizes businesses that care about their environment and the community. To be certified as a Clean Prairie Company, a business must keep the exterior of their property free from litter and clutter and the interior must be kept clean and orderly. Additional activities and community participation is encouraged to certify at higher levels.

Learn more about becoming a Clean Prairie Company at www.gptx.org/cleanprairie.

Integrated Pest Management

Pest control is an important part of maintaining food safety in your facility. Pests, such as rodents, cockroaches, ants, and flies, can compromise the integrity of your food and cause your establishment to appear unclean. One effective way to reduce pest infestation is by implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. It uses information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment, along with available pest control methods, to manage pests economically and with as little hazard as possible to people, property, and the environment.

The easiest way to control pests and the first step in IPM is prevention. Prevent entry to your establishment by sealing off any access points from outside. Next, eliminate sources of food for pests by taking trash out regularly, cleaning often, and storing food properly. By preventing entry and eliminating food sources, you can help prevent a pest problem before it starts—and save money on pest control services. If pests become a problem, however, you must contact a licensed pest control company.

For more information visit: www.cdc.gov/rodents/



This Newsletter is a publication of the:
City of Grand Prairie Public Health and Environmental Quality Department

Submit your comments and suggestions to:
Editor: Werner Rodriguez
Phone: 972-237-8056
Email: wrodriguez@gptx.org



Switch to LED bulbs for clean air.

Grease Trap Maintenance

All food service establishments in the City of Grand Prairie must pump their grease trap according to their established frequency. The pumping frequency of the grease trap is shown on the health permit issued to each facility. When contracting services, ensure that the liquid waste hauler is permitted by the city and after the grease trap is pumped a copy of the trip ticket should be obtained by the owner/manager of the facility. All establishments must keep a copy of each pumping event for at least 2 years and must be available for inspection at all times.

For more information please call 972-237-8055.