

Good Personal Hygiene Practices in a Produce Packing Facility



Those who work on farms play a key role in ensuring the safety of the produce they grow, harvest, pack and hold.

Poor worker health and hygiene was identified as the potential contributing factor in the contamination of the product in many foodborne illness outbreaks. Therefore, the importance of clean hands at all phases of production, especially harvesting and packing, cannot be emphasized enough.

Hand-washing

Hands must be washed properly after using the bathroom, eating, coughing or sneezing, touching or scratching wounds, handling garbage and touching animals. Hand-washing facilities must be easily accessible and close to the packing areas.

Proper hand-washing instructions are provided in the following video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT5phge_JS0&list=UU45N2zrbZ_hglc53ANcAyAg.

To wash hands properly, it is necessary to follow the steps indicated below. The entire process should take about 20-25 seconds.

1. Wet hands and arms using running water that is as hot as you can comfortably tolerate. It should be at least 100 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Apply enough soap to build up a good lather.
3. Scrub hands and arms vigorously for 10 to 15

seconds. Clean under fingernails, between fingers and under jewelry (jewelry should not be on hands).

4. Rinse hands and arms thoroughly with running water.
5. Dry hands and arms with a single-use paper towel or a warm-air hand drier. Consider using a paper towel to turn off the faucet and/or to open the door when leaving the restroom to avoid cross-contamination.

A hand-washing station must have all of the components below:

- Water (hot and cold)
- Liquid soap
- Sanitary hand drying devices (single use paper towels)
- Waste basket
- Signage. (It is important for the signage to be in the languages spoken by all workers. It also is a good idea to post signs at all relevant entry points with an overview of the farm rules with regard to hygiene.)

Who Should Wash Their Hands?

All people entering or working in the packing area must wash their hands, including visitors. Visitors to the packing area must follow the same cleanliness practices as workers and wash their hands before touching any food.

Worker Health

Workers must report if they are suffering from, or have been in contact with, any disease likely to be transmitted through food.

They should report infected wounds, skin complaints, vomiting or diarrhea. All workers suffering from any of these must be excluded from contacting food in the food packing area for as long as the symptoms exist.

Minor injuries such as cuts must be covered with bandages that easily are visible. Any lesions that contain pus, such as boils or infected wounds, that are open or draining and are located on parts of the body that might have contact with produce during harvesting, sorting or



packing increase the risk of product contamination. If the lesions cannot be effectively covered, the employee should not be working in any area close to fresh produce, utensils or other food contact surfaces or equipment.

Food and Drinks

Eating, chewing gum or drinking must be allowed only in assigned places. A designated area for proper storage of food and drinks, including food that has been brought from home, must be in place. Drinking water is allowed either from dispensers and/or by using covered disposable cups with a straw.

Jewelry

No jewelry is allowed while working with food, with the exception of a single plain band. Rings and studs in other exposed parts of the body such as noses and eyebrows are not allowed.

Smoking

Smoking is not allowed in produce packing areas. Designated, enclosed and controlled smoking areas must be isolated from packing areas to an extent that ensures smoke cannot reach the product.

Clothing

Work clothes must be clean and be worn at all times in the packing areas. If necessary and where appropriate,

hair coverings, including those for beards or mustaches, must be worn by workers who come in direct contact with products.

Education and Training

All new personnel must receive initial training covering the good manufacturing process and hygiene rules before starting employment. A program of refresher good manufacturing process and hygiene training must be in place, and records must be maintained for all staff members who have been trained.

- Training and monitoring must be performed conscientiously.
- Train staff to follow good manufacturing practices and safety procedures, including proper hand-washing.
- Provide initial and ongoing training.
- Provide all staff with general good manufacturing practice and produce safety knowledge.
- Provide job-specific safety training.
- Retrain staff regularly.
- Monitor staff to make sure they are following procedures.
- Document training.
- Be a role model!



A single plain band



Employees should remove excessive jewelry before handling produce



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Authors

Fatemeh Malekian, Ph.D., Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center
Achyut Adhikari, Ph.D., LSU AgCenter School of Nutrition and Food Sciences
Charles Graham, Ph.D., LSU AgCenter Pecan Research-Extension Station
Kathryn Fontenot, Ph.D., LSU AgCenter School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences
Melanie L. Lewis Ivey, Ph.D., LSU AgCenter Department of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology

References:
www.servsafe.com, www.fda.gov

William B. Richardson, LSU Vice President for Agriculture
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service
LSU College of Agriculture

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