

FAQs – No Bare Hand Contact



November 2024

What is bare hand contact?

Bare hand contact means touching ready-to-eat (RTE) foods with bare hands (i.e., without wearing gloves or using other protective barriers).

What are ready-to-eat foods?

Ready-to-eat foods are any foods that will not undergo a kill step (such as cooking or reheating) prior to service or consumption.

Is bare hand contact with RTE foods allowed?

Unless otherwise exempt, bare hand contact with RTE foods is prohibited.

What is the concern with bare hand contact and RTE foods?

Pathogens can transfer from hands to food, enabling the potential for foodborne illness. Additionally, since RTE foods do not have a kill step such as cooking, there is no opportunity to eliminate the potential pathogens.

What can be used to avoid bare hand contact?

Deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, dispensing equipment, and other suitable utensils shall be used to avoid bare hand contact with RTE foods.

Fast Facts

- Gloves are not a replacement for handwashing
- Handwashing alone does not entirely reduce the risk of spreading pathogens
- Bare hand contact enables the spread of pathogens such as norovirus (aka stomach flu)
- Cake fondant and hand-dipped chocolate are considered RTE food

For additional information on no bare hand contact:

<https://www.in.gov/health/food-protection/retail/>

