

Wisconsin Food Code FACT SHEET



#13: Hand Antiseptics

Hand antiseptics are not substitutes for handwashing. Hand antiseptics should be used only **after** proper hand washing has been completed. Handwashing with soap and water is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses—the major causes of foodborne illness. Hand antiseptics are effective in killing bacteria and some viruses on **clean** hands. If hand antiseptics are used incorrectly they can become another source of food contamination.

Hand antiseptics are not intended to replace soap in the handwashing station. They are not effective in removing dirt or other organic materials. The hands of food workers are often wet; often contaminated with fatty material or with food high in proteins. The presence of water, food, fatty materials, feces and blood on the hands can significantly reduce the effectiveness of hand antiseptics.

Hand antiseptics are considered to be a food additive. The hand antiseptic or its ingredients need to be approved by FDA. However, if a hand antiseptic that does not meet FDA criteria is used, it should be used after proper handwashing. It should also be:

1. Followed by a thorough hand rinsing in clean water prior to hand contact with food or by the use of gloves; or
2. Limited to situations that involve no direct contact with food by bare hands.



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