

Highly Susceptible Populations

What are highly susceptible populations (HSP)?

- A population is highly susceptible to foodborne illness if it is:
 - Immunocompromised
 - Preschool-age children
 - Older adults
 - Individuals who receive services at custodial care, health care, assisted living, child/adult day care center, kidney dialysis center, hospital, nursing home, or nutritional or senior center.

What should managers serving a HSP do to help prevent exposure to viruses and harmful pathogens?

- Follow protocols for exclusion and restriction, adjusting, and reinstating employees' work status in the establishment.
- Ensure that employees are properly trained in food safety as it relates to their duties and use additional safeguards required for working in an HSP.
- Reinforce employee compliance to guarantee good handwashing, acknowledge onset of symptoms, meet reporting requirements, and ensure no bare hand contact with RTE food by educating employees.
- Ensure that employees have access to facilities that are well maintained and have the necessary supplies available to follow proper handwashing.

What can employees do to help prevent the spread of disease in HSPs?

- Report to the manager they are experiencing vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, and/or sore throat with fever.
- Keep hands and arms clean.
- Follow proper handwashing procedures at designated handwashing sinks only.
- Maintain trimmed fingernails. Edges and surfaces should be smooth and cleanable.
- Do not wear jewelry on hands and arms except for a plain ring, like a wedding band.
- Use single-use gloves for one task. If the gloves are damaged or soiled or when interruptions occur in the process, they must be discarded.
- Do not touch RTE foods with bare hands, and minimize bare hand contact with exposed food that is not RTE.
- Do not use a utensil more than once to taste food that is to be served or sold.
- Wear clean clothes and hair restraints.
- Do not work with exposed food if experiencing persistent sneezing, coughing, or a runny nose or discharge from eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Eat and drink in designated areas to avoid the contamination of exposed food, food equipment, utensils, linen, and unwrapped single-service, and single-use items or items that require protection.
- Drink from a closed beverage container and handle the container properly to prevent the contamination of their hands and the container, exposed food, or other articles in the food establishment.



When should an employee be denied employment serving an HSP?

- When a conditional job offer is made contingent on responses to questions or medical examinations to find out whether the individual has an illness that can be transmitted through food, and the prospective employee:
 - Has or reports symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, or sore throat with fever, or has a lesion with pus, or has an uncovered open wound on hands, wrists, or on other body parts
 - Reports a diagnosed illness contracted from *E. coli*/STEC, Hepatitis A virus, Norovirus, *Salmonella*, or *Shigella*.
 - Reports a diagnosis of *Salmonella* within the last 3 months and did not complete treatment prescribed by a healthcare provider.
 - Has been exposed to, or implicated as, a suspected source by eating or preparing food associated with a confirmed disease outbreak.
 - Reports a history of exposure to:
 - Confirmed disease outbreak
 - Household member in a confirmed outbreak
 - Someone diagnosed with a Big 5 disease