

March 2017

TO: Industry and Regulatory Food Safety Professionals

FROM: The Food and Drug Administration, National Retail Food Team

SUBJECT: ***Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook***

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is pleased to release the ***Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook*** (hereafter referred to as Handbook) to encourage practices and behaviors that can help prevent food employees from spreading foodborne pathogens to food. The information in this handbook is taken from provisions in the *2005 FDA Food Code* and its *Supplement* aimed at preventing ill food employees from transmitting disease in the foodservice and retail food service setting.

2014 Update: The 2013 FDA Food Code (FC) added nontyphoidal *Salmonella* (NTS) as one of the reportable illnesses for action by the Person in Charge. Code language was added to address employee health controls for the exclusion (E) and restriction (R) of NTS, and removal of E and R from NTS. **The related Tables/Decision Trees within this Handbook were updated only in the 2013 FDA Food Code (and not yet in this Handbook).** See the 2013 Food Code changes at www.fda.gov/FoodCode.

The Handbook provides information in a question-and-answer format that food establishment management and food employees can use to prevent the spread of foodborne disease. It also provides easy reference to forms and tables that food establishments and the public health community may find useful when training staff and addressing employee health and hygiene matters. Additionally, highlights of three interventions that can be effective in prevention of the transmission of foodborne viruses and bacteria in food establishments are included. These interventions include: (a) restricting or excluding ill food employees from working with food; (b) using proper handwashing procedures; and (c) eliminating bare hand contact with foods that are ready-to-eat (RTE). Concurrent use of each intervention will help prevent the transmission of viruses, bacteria, and protozoan oocysts from food employees to consumers through contaminated food. **Note that the recommendations provided are not to be construed as medical advice or directions to diagnose a medical condition. The person in charge and the food employee always have the option to seek professional medical attention as warranted by the situation at hand.**

We encourage the frequent use of this Handbook with the FDA *Food Code* as a tool in food employee and management training courses and as a reference during a foodborne outbreak event. Its use can help provide a greater understanding of how to comply with employee health recommendations outlined in the *Food Code* and lead to the use of behaviors and practices that help prevent spreading viruses and bacteria to food.

Food safety is a top priority for FDA. This Handbook is one of several aids from FDA to assist our regulatory and industry partners in achieving a reduction in the occurrence of foodborne illness risk factors in food service, retail stores, institutions, schools, and other retail-level establishments nationwide. Working together, we will rise to the challenge of making sure all consumers continue to enjoy a safe food supply.

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