

# Clean - It's easy and important



Food premises need continual cleaning and sanitising to eliminate microorganisms that may contaminate food and lead to food poisoning. Some areas, equipment and surfaces are more prone to contamination than others and will need more frequent cleaning and sanitation, and in some cases, specialised procedures.

## Cleaning agents

Commercial operations need to use commercial-grade cleaning agents. Domestic, off the supermarket shelf type chemicals are not strong enough to be effective in food premises.

Suppliers can be found in the Yellow Pages under "Cleaning Chemicals and Supplies" and "Cleansers and Detergents". Make sure your supplier understands your requirements, explains the correct use of each chemical and follows up to ensure the products are meeting your requirements.

The initial outlay for commercial-grade cleaning agents may seem high, but if you use them properly, they should prove cost-effective in terms of both price and labour-time. Domestic-grade agents may prove more expensive if they are not doing the job and your premises becomes implicated in a food poisoning event.

In most cases, you will only need two or three chemicals to do a thorough job, but keep in mind that an effective, efficient cleaning process requires both detergents and disinfectants.

## Detergents

Detergents, or degreasers, remove dirt and grease but only work well in clean, regularly changed water. They act by loosening dirt from soiled surfaces and keeping the dirt in suspension in the water until it is removed and rinsed away. Detergents do not destroy microorganisms so although the item looks clean, it may still be covered with harmful bacteria.

## Disinfectants

Disinfectants, or sanitisers, destroy bacteria and other microorganisms if you use them according to the manufacturer's instructions. They do not work well on soiled surfaces or

equipment so use a detergent first to ensure the item is properly cleaned. Most commonly used disinfectants include hot water, steam, chlorine, iodine and quaternary ammonium compounds.

## Points to remember about cleaning agents:

- Use the right cleaning agent for the surface you are cleaning
- Use the correct amount and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Do not mix cleaning agents
- Use clean equipment
- Always store cleaning agents and equipment safely, away from food and food contact areas
- Never decant cleaning agents into empty food containers

## The Cleaning Procedure

Cleaning and disinfection normally consists of six basic steps:

1. Pre-cleaning - removes excess soil by sweeping, wiping or pre-rinsing
2. Main cleaning - loosens the surface grease and dirt using a detergent
3. Rinsing - removes loose dirt and detergent
4. Disinfecting - destroys bacteria using a disinfectant
5. Final rinsing - removes the disinfectant
6. Drying - preferably done naturally by evaporation or else with single-use paper towels or clean dry cloths

Remember to clean and dry the cleaning equipment after use. Brushes and mops should be hung off the floor, buckets emptied and turned upside down and cloths washed, dried and put away. Cleaning equipment must be stored separately from food preparation and storage areas.

## Cleaning schedules

A written cleaning schedule should be developed and implemented to ensure the entire premises and all equipment is thoroughly cleaned and sanitised.

Managers must:

- Ensure that staff are fully trained and familiar with cleaning schedules
- Carry out regular reviews to ensure staff comply with the requirements

Staff should tell management if:

- Schedules need updating
- Supplies of cleaning agents are running low

A cleaning schedule should be signed off as acceptable by a supervisor at the end of each week and should stipulate:

- Items to be cleaned – Include each area of the premises and all large items of equipment such as ovens, fridges and ventilation hoods
- Cleaning agent to be used
- Method of cleaning
- Frequency of cleaning
- Person responsible for that task - If you allocate tasks to specific staff, everyone has a share of the work and no one can say they thought someone else was doing it.
- Date cleaning was completed

## Clean as you go policies

In addition to the cleaning tasks identified in the schedules, every food handler must adopt the 'clean as you go' policy. This means:

- Cleaning up spills when they happen
- Cleaning all surfaces, utensils and equipment that come into contact with food after every use, or at regular scheduled times
- Washing your hands often

## Dishwashing

For premises with a properly working dishwasher, equipment can easily be cleaned and disinfected.

Commercial-grade detergent must be automatically dosed into the machine during the wash cycle. Water temperatures should be:

- Wash cycle - 60°C or above
- Rinse cycle - 77°C or above for a least 10 seconds.
- Rinse tank – at least 83°C

For premises without a dishwasher, wash dishes in detergent and water, at not less than 43°C. They must then be rinsed and soaked in either boiling water for at least 30 seconds or in water at a minimum of 77°C for more than 2 minutes.