

# Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Hygiene and Handwashing Standards Related to Allergen Control

## Purpose:

This SOP defines **hygiene and handwashing standards related to allergen control**, focusing on preventing cross-contamination in food handling environments. It includes guidelines on proper handwashing techniques, use of sanitizers, timing and frequency of handwashing, and protocols for employees handling allergenic ingredients. The objective is to maintain a safe and allergen-free workspace by minimizing allergen transfer through effective hygiene practices.

## Scope

This SOP applies to all employees involved in food handling, preparation, and service in the facility, particularly those who work with or near allergenic ingredients.

## Responsibilities

- All staff must adhere to hygiene and handwashing procedures.
- Supervisors must ensure staff compliance and provide ongoing training.

## Handwashing Guidelines

1. **When to Wash Hands:**
  - Before starting work.
  - Before handling food or clean equipment.
  - After handling any allergenic food or ingredient.
  - After using the restroom, eating, drinking, coughing, or sneezing.
  - After touching garbage, cleaning products, or dirty objects.
  - After switching from handling a non-allergenic to an allergenic product and vice versa.
  - After removing gloves.
2. **Proper Handwashing Technique:**
  - a. Wet hands with clean, running water (warm preferred).
  - b. Apply sufficient soap to cover all hand surfaces.
  - c. Rub hands palm to palm, between fingers, back of hands, and under nails for at least 20 seconds.
  - d. Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
  - e. Dry hands with a disposable towel or approved hand drier.
  - f. Turn off the tap with the towel to avoid recontamination.
3. **Use of Hand Sanitizers:**
  - Hand sanitizers are **not a substitute** for proper handwashing, especially after handling allergens.
  - Use only after correct handwashing, if required.

## Protocols for Handling Allergenic Ingredients

- Wear disposable gloves when handling allergens. Change gloves and wash hands after each allergen-related task.
- Designate separate utensils and preparation areas for allergenic ingredients where possible.
- Never touch common surfaces or non-allergenic foods with unwashed hands after handling allergens.
- Dispose of waste and used gloves in designated bins immediately after use.

## Training and Compliance

- All new staff must be trained in these procedures before handling food.
- Refresher training must be conducted at least annually or as needed.
- Supervisors to conduct periodic audits and reinforce compliance.

## Documentation

- Maintain records of training, handwashing checks, and compliance audits.
- Log any allergen incidents and corrective actions taken.

## References

- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)
- Local health department regulations
- Facility's Allergen Control Plan