



# Wisconsin Food Code Fact Sheet



## Hand Antiseptic Use in Food Service

Handwashing with soap and water is the most effective way to prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses – the major causes of foodborne illness.

### Hand antiseptics are not substitutes for handwashing.

- Hand antiseptics should only be used after proper handwashing has been completed.
- Hand antiseptics are effective in killing bacteria and some viruses on clean hands.
- Alcohol-based hand antiseptics are not effective against norovirus, the most common cause of foodborne illness.

### Hand antiseptics are not intended to replace soap in the handwashing station.

- Hand antiseptics are not effective in removing dirt or other organic materials.
  - The hands of food workers are often wet and contaminated with food high in protein or fatty materials. The presence of water, food, fatty materials, feces and blood on the hands can reduce the effectiveness of hand antiseptics.



### Hand antiseptics are considered a food additive.

- The hand antiseptic or its ingredients must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- If a hand antiseptic does not meet FDA criteria, it must be used after proper handwashing. It must also be:
  - Followed by a thorough hand rinsing in clean water prior to hand contact with food or by the use of gloves, or
  - Limited to situations that involve no direct contact with food by bare hands.
- Improper use of hand antiseptics can lead to food contamination.

See more food code fact sheets from the Division of Food and Recreational Safety by visiting the [DATCP website](#).