Clean Start!

Tips on professional attire, personal hygiene and work readiness

LESSON Content

- Characteristics of unprofessional, unsanitary employee
- Fundamentals of handwashing
- Basics of personal hygiene

LEARNING Objectives

- Participants will recognize the importance of a clean and professional personal appearance
- Participants will be able to correctly wash their hands
- Participants will adopt personal habits and hygiene that ensure food safety

Lesson TIME: 10 minutes
Preparation TIME: 10 minutes to read through the lesson

MATERIALS Needed

- Handouts

SCRIPT

The script on the following pages is provided for your use. Notes to you are in ***bold italics*** – they are not part of the script. Handouts can be made into transparencies or copied and distributed along with your talk.

Have you ever noticed that employees in fast food outlets often wear uniforms and that restaurant waiters wear dark pants with white shirts? Special clothing gives us a professional appearance and lets our customers know that we are ready to serve them.

Health workers also wear uniforms and adhere to specific dress codes. You would probably worry about what might get left inside you if you were going into surgery and your surgeon wore long dangling earrings, had fake nails with paste on rhinestones and wore no hair cover. You probably would not feel very safe or sure about your surgery.

Our customers have the same reactions to ways in which we dress for work. Lets list some things that might make our customers uncomfortable about a worker's attire.

(Ask a participant to record responses on a flip chart or board while you lead the discussion. Their list might include:

Inappropriate attire

- ***Wears big or dangling jewelry (necklaces, pins, bracelets, earrings or large, ornate finger rings)***
- ***Has long, uncontrolled hair***
- ***Does not wear a hair restraint and has "dangling" strands of hair***
- ***Wears soiled uniform or clothing***
- ***Has long, polished fingernails or polish with paste-ons***

Our health habits are also important to our customers. Again, think about going to surgery. What if your surgeon had a bad cold with a drippy nose or walked into the surgery room without gloves. Would you feel confident about your surgery?

Think about your favorite restaurant. What things do you see there that indicate that they are following professional and personal hygiene codes? What things do you see that evidence that they are not? ***(Allow 1-2 participants to share their observations.)***

Lets list personal habits that would make us uncomfortable about eating food served by a person who was not following high hygiene standards.

(Ask a participant to record responses on a flip chart or board while you lead the discussion. Their list might include:

Unhealthy Personal Habits

- ***Coughs or sneezes into food***
- ***Scratches or touches head, face, skin or hair then handles food***
- ***Wipes mouth or nose with fingers***
- ***Smokes, chews gum or eats in non-designated areas***
- ***Fails to wash hands***
- ***Washes hands in sink used to prepare food***
- ***Touches food-contact surface of glassware or tableware with bare hands***
- ***Tastes food with hands or with spoon used for cooking***
- ***Nibbles on food in food preparation or service area***

Although we cannot see them, bacteria are on our bodies – our hands, hair, clothing and everything that we touch. As we have already learned, bacteria grow quickly and spread fast in foods. So it is important for us to arrive at work each day, clean and ready to start work. What are some personal hygiene practices that will prevent foodborne illness?
(Ask a participant to record responses on a flip chart or board while you lead the discussion. Their list might include:

Healthy Hygiene

- ***Bathe daily***
- ***Wash hair frequently (oily, dirty hair can carry and hold large numbers of bacteria)***
- ***Wear a hair net or cap or effective hair restraint to keep hair and dandruff from falling into food***
- ***Keep fingernails clean or trimmed (long or ragged nails harbor bacteria. Long or false nails and dark colored polish and paste-ons can break off into food)***
- ***Bandage open sores***
- ***Wear plastic gloves to cover bandages***
- ***Wash hands frequently***
- ***Change gloves regularly***
- ***Wash hands before putting on gloves.***

Hand washing is so important that surgeons are even nick-named "scrubs" and the uniforms they wear during surgery are also called "scrubs." If you have ever seen a surgeon prepare for an operation, you know that they really do "scrub." They even use brushes to wash their arms, hands and under their nails before they gown and glove for surgery.

When should we wash our hands?
(Ask a participant to record responses on a flip chart or board while you lead the discussion. Their list might include:

When to Wash

- ***Upon reporting to work and after breaks***
- ***Whenever hands are soiled***
- ***After using a handkerchief, the restroom, eating, using the phone or smoking***
- ***After handling inventory, raw food or money***
- ***After touching or scratching body areas, such as ears, mouth, nose or hair***
- ***After clearing, scraping or washing dirty plates or utensils***
- ***After removing trash or debris***

The steps for effective handwashing are easy. We will post them near sinks to help us all remember to do a thorough job. **(display handout)**

Handwashing is one of THE most important sanitation practices. Most people do it too quickly. Here's a little gimmick to help you remember to wash thoroughly and long.

How to Wash your Hands Properly-Sing-a-Long!!

Wet hands with warm running water
Apply soap
Rub hands together AT LEAST 20 seconds, washing between fingers and under fingernails (Here's where you sing!! It takes 10 seconds to sing "Happy Birthday to you." Sing it twice as you rub and scrub and you will get the job done!)
Rinse hands under running water
Dry hands with paper towel
Use the paper towel to turn off faucets and open exit door.

Clean Start!

What are some messages that would make our customers uncomfortable?

Unhealthy Personal Habits

Coughs or sneezes into food
Scratches or touches head, face, skin or hair, then handles food
Wipes mouth or nose with fingers
Smokes, chews gum or eats in non-designated areas
Fails to wash hands
Washes hands in sink used to prepare food
Touches food-contact surface of glassware or tableware with bare hands
Tastes food with hands or with spoon used for cooking
Nibbles on food in food preparation or service area

Think about your favorite restaurant. What things do you see there that indicate that they are following professional and personal hygiene codes? What makes our customers think we are ready to serve them? List some personal habits that help us follow high standards.

Healthy Hygiene

Bathe daily
Shampoo hair frequently
Wear an effective hair restraint
Keep fingernails clean and trimmed
Bandage open sores (Check with manager)
Wear plastic gloves to cover bandages
Wash hands frequently
Change disposable gloves frequently
Wash hands before putting on disposable gloves

Why is handwashing so important?

When to Wash Hands

Upon reporting to work and after breaks
Whenever hands are soiled
After using a handkerchief, the restroom, eating, using the phone or smoking
After handling inventory, raw food, or money
After touching or scratching body areas, such as ears, mouth, nose or hair
After clearing, scraping or washing dirty plates or utensils
After removing trash or debris

Optional Exercise

Handwashing Demonstration

This is a quick and dramatic way to demonstrate the importance of handwashing. You will need the following materials:

Bar of soap
Pitcher of water
Wash basin or large bowl
Hand towel
8 oz drinking glass

Ask a volunteer to demonstrate proper handwashing before the group. Tell the volunteer to tell you when they want water poured over their hands. Generally they will ask you to pour water to wet their hands, they will then apply soap, and they will ask you to pour water to rinse their hands.

When the volunteer has completed handwashing, ask the observers if they think that the volunteer has done a thorough job. If not, as the volunteer to repeat the process.

When all agree that the volunteer has successfully completed washing, proceed to the real test of their conviction.

Place the drinking glass on the table. Ask the volunteer to hold their hands over the glass. Pour water over their hands and into the glass. Now hand the glass to any one of the observers and ask them to drink it. Most will refuse.

Summarize by noting that the group had agreed that the volunteer's hands were clean yet most of us would not want to drink water that was poured over their hands. This is because we all recognize that in general hands carry and harbor bacteria. Therefore you can never wash your hands enough when handling food.