



Education Toolbox

Glove Use in Catering Services

Introduction

Gloves are not required for all catering activities. They should only be worn during catering activities where risk presents. Understanding when gloves are required, the types of gloves available, and their limitations supports safe and effective care.

1. Why are gloves worn?

- To reduce the risk of spreading organisms between individuals, foods, equipment/utensils and the environment.
- To reduce the risk of contamination from Health Care Worker (HCW) non-intact skin.
- To reduce the risk of HCW exposure to hazardous substances and chemicals

2. Facts about catering glove use

- Gloves are not a substitute for hand hygiene.
- In some situations, hand hygiene alone may be safer and more appropriate than wearing gloves.
- Cuts, abrasions, or broken skin on hands should be covered with a coloured occlusive dressing before gloves are worn.
- Gloves may have microscopic defects and do not provide absolute protection from hand contamination.
- Gloves can become contaminated during use and may spread microorganisms if not changed appropriately.
- Hands can become contaminated during glove removal if correct technique is not followed.
- Catering gloves are single-use items and must never be washed, sanitised or reused.



3. Types of gloves used in catering services

Gloves used in catering are single use, disposable gloves and reusable utility gloves. They are used during sanitisation of food, meal preparation, plating, surface and equipment utensil cleaning/disinfection and waste management. These include:

- Non-sterile catering gloves- coloured (blue is the industry standard, but not mandatory) gloves: must be labelled food grade/food safe
 - Nitrile catering– recommended safest for use
 - Combined vinyl / nitrile catering
 - Vinyl catering – less fit, can cause hands to sweat resulting in discomfort and skin conditions. Not for use with chemicals.
- Reusable utility gloves
 - For use in handling/preparing high risk chemicals and maintenance cleaning/disinfection of items/equipment or surfaces.
 - Clean according to the manufacturer's instructions. Hang up to dry after use, store dry between uses. Replace when showing signs of wear.

Examples:





4. When TO wear gloves

Exposure type	Example
Direct handling	Catering nitrile, vinyl/ nitrile or vinyl: Food handling and preparation: ➤ When attending sanitisation of food (protect from chemical) ➤ When attending ready-to-eat (RTE) food (any foods that are not going through a heating/cooking process to 75 Celsius), i.e. cut up fruit, sandwiches, desserts, cakes, toast ➤ When handling raw protein, e.g. chicken, seafood
Indirect handling	Catering nitrile, vinyl/ nitrile or vinyl: ➤ Clearing: When dismantling used trays and contents ➤ When attending waste management Catering nitrile, vinyl/nitrile or reusable utility: Cleaning/disinfecting: ➤ When washing and cleaning up ➤ When cleaning/disinfecting the kitchen/pantries, dining areas, trolleys etc ➤ When cleaning catering related spill ➤ When managing chemicals

5. When NOT to wear gloves

Exposure type	Example
Direct handling	➤ When utensils can be used to handle foods
Indirect handling	➤ When delivering meals (not plating) ➤ When assisting with feeding ➤ When preparing, distributing or collecting meal trays ➤ When setting up tables or food trolleys ➤ During food transport on trolleys or bain-marie ➤ When putting items away or tidying ➤ Restocking food items



6. When to change gloves

Gloves must be removed or if necessary, changed after each task/activity, or if they become damaged. Such as:

- If they become contaminated
- When switching between raw and ready-to-eat food
- When changing catering tasks (i.e. plating to attending to dishwasher)
- After handling waste
- Between sweeping, mopping and cleaning/disinfecting differing areas
- If gloves are damaged
- When hands become sweaty, to reduce the risk of dermatitis

7. Overuse:

Overuse of gloves can result in:

- Missed hand hygiene opportunities
- Increase risk of skin irritation or dermatitis
- Wasted resources
- Negative impact on sustainability
- Raise costs including price of products and waste removal
- Cause an environment impact

8. Hand Hygiene

- Hand hygiene must be performed:
 - Before putting on gloves (donning)
 - Immediately after removing gloves (doffing)

9. Gloving

- Appropriate glove selection and correct donning and doffing techniques minimise the risk of cross-transmission.
 - 5 Easy Steps for Gloving Use
<https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-04/5-easy-steps-glove-use-poster-a3.PDF>



- Appendix 1 - Technique for donning and removing non-sterile examination gloves

10. References

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ACIPC

Australasian College
for Infection Prevention and Control

11. Endorsement / Approval

Version	Date	Addition/Amendments	Author	Review By
1.0	August 2026	New Resource	C Spinks, ACIPC Aged Care Working Group	Advancing IPC Practice and Standards Committee

12. Contact Information

ACIPC office: office@acipc.org.au





Appendix 1

When the hand hygiene indication occurs before a contact requiring glove use, perform hand hygiene by rubbing with an alcohol-based handrub or by washing with soap and water.

I. HOW TO DON GLOVES:



1. Take out a glove from its original box



2. Touch only a restricted surface of the glove corresponding to the wrist (at the top edge of the cuff)



3. Don the first glove



4. Take the second glove with the bare hand and touch only a restricted surface of glove corresponding to the wrist



5. To avoid touching the skin of the forearm with the gloved hand, turn the external surface of the glove to be donned on the folded fingers of the gloved hand, thus permitting to glove the second hand

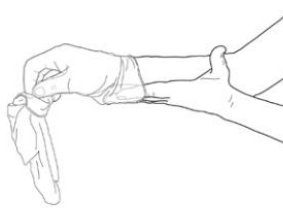


6. Once gloved, hands should not touch anything else that is not defined by indications and conditions for glove use

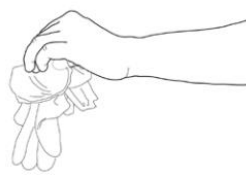
II. HOW TO REMOVE GLOVES:



1. Pinch one glove at the wrist level to remove it, without touching the skin of the forearm, and peel away from the hand, thus allowing the glove to turn inside out



2. Hold the removed glove in the gloved hand and slide the fingers of the ungloved hand inside between the glove and the wrist. Remove the second glove by rolling it down the hand and fold into the first glove



3. Discard the removed gloves

4. Then, perform hand hygiene by rubbing with an alcohol-based handrub or by washing with soap and water

Technique for donning and removing non-sterile examination gloves: [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/integrated-health-services-\(ihs\)/infection-prevention-and-control/hand-hygiene/tools/glove-use-information-leaflet.pdf?sfvrsn=13670aa_10&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/integrated-health-services-(ihs)/infection-prevention-and-control/hand-hygiene/tools/glove-use-information-leaflet.pdf?sfvrsn=13670aa_10&download=true)