



Hats and Food Handlers

Environmental Health Guide

Why Wear a Hat?

Hats should be worn to prevent food contamination. Bacteria cling to the hair and scalp, living off dandruff, dust and perspiration collected in the hair. Given time, any harmful bacteria present can grow to numbers sufficient to cause food poisoning.

Hats:

- a) prevent food handlers from directly touching hair and scalp with fingers and passing bacteria from the hair onto food; and
- b) prevent dandruff and hairs from falling into food or on utensils and work surfaces;

In addition hats:

- c) protect food handlers' hair from gas burner flames, smells, grease and steam; and
- d) promote a positive image to consumers that food handlers care about food safety and take pride in their profession.

When Should a Hat be Worn?

The Western Australian Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations 1993 require persons in food preparation and packing areas to:

‘wear clean hair covering appropriate for the nature of the food handling activity to prevent hair from coming into contact with food or food contact surfaces.’

When Should the Hair be Fully Covered?

Full hair covering should be worn in Class 1 and 2 food preparation areas. These include:

- kitchens in restaurants, cafes, takeaways
- delicatessen counters
- preparation areas in butchers, bakers and fish mongers
- food processing factories.

By their nature, foods prepared in these premises are subject to spoilage, rapid bacterial growth or require a high level of protection. All food handling staff as well as visitors to the area - maintenance people, trade representatives, Environmental Health Officers, etc. should wear full hair covering.

Suitable hair coverings include:

- hats with hair nets attached;
- baseball style hats which contain all the hair;
- baseball hats worn over hair nets;
- disposable caps;
- mob caps.

When preparing foods, full hair covering should be worn.



When Should the Hair be Partly Covered?

Partial hair covering keeps hair away from the face, prevents some finger contact with hair, and prevents hair from falling into food.

When serving or handling food that is protected, partial hair covering may be suitable.

A partial hair cover may be suitable when serving food or handling food that is protected e.g.

- takeaway front counter
- soft drink dispenser counter
- ice cream servery

When is a Hat Not Required?

No hair covering is required when handling food which is fully wrapped or which will be further washed before being eaten, e.g.

- deli selling packaged food only
- greengrocer
- liquor store

Where Can I get a Suitable Hat?

Hats can be made to your own design, or selected from a wide range available from hat suppliers. Hats should be comfortable to wear and appropriate for the job.

Details of hat suppliers can be found in the Yellow Pages listed under hats or catering equipment.

What if I Choose Not to Wear a Hat in a Food Preparation Area?

When working in a food preparation area, it is an offence not to wear a hat.

It is your personal responsibility to make sure that you wear a hat. If you choose not to, you may be prosecuted and liable for a fine.

Further Information

For further information, contact an Environmental Health Officer at your local government

or

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