

## **Prevention of Cross-contamination**

Personnel hygiene practices are essential to prevent RTE product cross-contamination. Pathogens could be present on the hands of workers handling the food. The hands are particularly important in transmitting foodborne pathogens. Workers with dirty hands or fingernails may contaminate the food being prepared. Any activity which may contaminate the hands must be followed by thorough hand washing. Examples of activities which may contaminate the hands include using toilet areas, picking up any item on the floor, handling boxes, and touching door handles or other hand-contact devices. The hands of employees can be contaminated by touching their nose or other body parts. Hand washing is a critical factor in reducing pathogens that can be transmitted from hands to RTE products. Many employees fail to wash their hands as often as necessary and even those who do may use flawed technique.

Examples of post-lethality contamination sources:

- Solutions to chill foods, brine solutions
- Slicers, dicers, saws
- Casing peelers
- Lugs, tubs, containers
- Hand tools
- Packaging materials and equipment
- Tables, conveyors, belts
- Door pulls and equipment controls (employee hand contact areas)
- Employees: clothing, gloves, aprons or boots
- Employee hygiene practices