

**GRAYSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION**

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Dear Retail Food Establishment,

On March 15, 2006 of this year, the Texas Department of State Health Services revised the Texas Food Establishment Rules. Part of this revision is concerned with bare hand contact with ready to eat foods. The rule now reads, "Except when washing fruits and vegetables food employees may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat foods with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment. Also, food employees shall minimize bare hand and arm contact with exposed food that is not in a ready-to-eat form. However, food employees not serving a highly susceptible population may contact exposed, ready-to-eat with their bare hands if:

- 1) documentation is maintained at the food establishment that food employees acknowledge that have received training in:
 - a. the risks of contacting the specific ready-to-eat food with bare hands;
 - b. proper handwashing;
 - c. when to wash their hands;
 - d. where to wash their hands;
 - e. proper fingernail maintenance;
 - f. prohibition of jewelry;
 - g. good hygienic practices and
 - h. employee health policies that detail how the food establishment complies with the rules.
- 2) Documentation is maintained at the food establishment that food employees contacting ready-to-eat foods with bare hands utilize two or more of the following control measures to provide additional safeguards to hazards associated with bare hand contact:
 - a. Double handwashing
 - b. Nail brushes
 - c. A hand sanitizer after proper handwashing
- 3) Documentation must be maintained at the food establishment that corrective actions are taken when the above clauses are not met."

The above information may be found in the Texas Food Establishment Rules §229.164(e)(1)(D)(i-iii).

These efforts are in effect to help reduce the presence of the Noro-virus which is spread by bare hand contact with food. It has caused 66% of all food borne illness outbreaks.

Please call if there are any questions pertaining to the above information.

Thank you,

Grayson County Environmental Health Division