



Fingernails and Hand Ornaments

Retail Food Establishments – Food Safety



Retail Food Establishments, Regulation 61-25, Chapter 2, Sections 2-302.11(A) and 2-303.11(A) specifies in part that:

- Food employees must keep fingernails trimmed, filed, and maintained so that edges and surfaces are cleanable and not rough. The length of nails should not extend beyond the fingertips.
- Other than a plain ring such as a wedding band, food employees must not wear jewelry, including medical alert jewelry on arms or hands.



“My fingernails and jewelry are an expression of who I am. Why can’t I have polished nails or wear jewelry?”

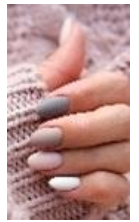
Best practices concerning fingernails and hand ornaments are to protect foods from potential biological (e.g., harmful germs), physical (e.g., hard, non-food items that could cause internal harm), and chemical (e.g., adhesive (glue), polish) hazards.

Food employees must wear intact, single-use gloves over polished, or artificial nails, when working with exposed food (e.g., cooking, washing, cutting, mixing, assembling) (2-302.11(B)). Single-use gloves that are torn or punctured should be immediately changed using proper handwashing and [Glove Use](#) procedures.

Below are examples of how fingernail and hand ornament hazards may be passed on to foods during preparation.

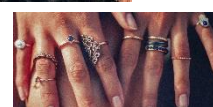
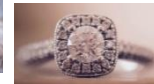
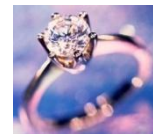
FINGERNAILS (e.g., nail polish, artificial nails, nail decoration)

- Areas underneath long nails and ragged surfaces of natural nails may trap germs, dirt and debris that are not easily removed during handwashing.
- Most nail polish is porous. Dirt and germs can become trapped between the layer of polish and the fingernail.
- Artificial nails are applied using glue. Germs and dirt can become trapped in the glue and collect in areas between the natural nail and the artificial nail.
- Long nails, artificial nails, or nail polish could be chipped or broken and fall into food.
- Nail decorations, such as decals, charms, or rhinestones could loosen and fall into food.



JEWELRY (rings, bracelets, watches)

- Hands cannot be properly washed when wearing rings on fingers.
- Dirt, food particles, and germs can be trapped in difficult to clean areas such as grooves, cracks, and other spaces of rings, bracelets, and watches.
- Stones or gems in rings, bracelets, and watches could loosen and fall into foods.
- Loose-fitting bracelets or watches could fall into foods during preparation.
- Touching jewelry to adjust it could transfer germs and dirt to clean hands.
- Rings that are not smooth could tear gloves.



Jewelry that must be worn to give medical emergency information should be discussed with the manager to find a solution that also protects food. For example, instead of a bracelet, you might wear a necklace or an anklet.

