

Hair: Restraints and Covers

Retail Food Establishments – Food Safety



Nothing can spoil a customer's meal quicker than finding a hair in their food. Hair is not known to cause a foodborne illness. However, bacteria and other germs that may be attached to hair strands could directly or indirectly contaminate food.

To minimize possible contamination, [Retail Food Establishments, Regulation 61-25](#), Chapter 2, Section 2-402.11(A) specifies in part that hair must be restrained or covered when working in food preparation and operation areas. A variety of hair covers and restraints may be used. For example: hats, caps, hairnets, visors, bands, or scarves. Hair may be pulled back away from the face into a ponytail or bun.



Hair should be styled or restrained so that it does not touch the face. Kitchen activities (e.g., food preparation, cooking, warewashing) can be hot, sweaty work. The natural reaction is to brush the hair away from the face which could contaminate hands.

No hair (bald), or short, neatly trimmed hair that is away from the face may be an acceptable option.



Along with hair on the head, food should be protected from facial hair.

Depending on the length of facial hair, a beard restraint may be needed. Hair that extends beyond the chin or the sides of the face should be covered. A mustache and/or a beard that is a 5 o'clock shadow, stubble, or other facial hair style that is close to the face may be acceptable without a beard cover.



Chapter 2, Section 2-402.11(B), states in part that the requirement for restraints and covers may not apply to food employees such as counter staff that **only** serve beverages and wrapped or packaged food, hostesses, wait staff and servers, **if** they present a minimal risk of contaminating exposed food, clean equipment, utensils, linens, and unwrapped single-service or single-use articles. Servers, for example, that also prepare salads or other foods, should wear hair covers or restraints.

NOTE:

Some food establishments have specific policies on covers or restraints that are to be worn in the food preparation and operation areas by all employees. These policies should be followed even if hair meets the restraint criteria or styles identified above.

