

## **Three Compartment Sinks Fact Sheet**

All food establishments that do not have automatic warewashing equipment shall have a sink with at least three compartments for manually washing, rinsing and sanitizing all equipment, utensils and tableware. The compartments of the sink shall be big enough to accommodate the largest cooking equipment and utensils, such as pots and pans.

A properly designed sink area shall have areas for scraping or rinsing food into garbage containers and drainboards to hold both soiled and clean items. The following steps will ensure that all equipment, utensils and tableware items are properly cleaned and sanitized:

1. Rinse, scrape or soak all items before washing.
2. Wash items in the first sink in a detergent solution. Use a brush, cloth or scrubber to loosen and remove soil. The water temperature in the first compartment should be at least 110°F (use a thermometer to check the water temperature). Replace the detergent solution when the suds are gone or when the water appears dirty.
3. Rinse the washed items in the second compartment by either immersing them in clean rinse water or by spraying them. Make sure all traces of food and detergent are removed.
4. To sanitize the washed and rinsed items, immerse them in hot water contained in the third compartment. If you are going to use a hot water rinse, the water temperature must be at least 171°F and the items must remain submerged for a minimum of 30 seconds. If you use a chemical sanitizer, the sanitizer must be mixed at the proper concentration (follow the manufacturer's directions to assure the proper concentration).
5. All washed, rinsed and sanitized items should be placed on a clean drainboard to air dry.

It is important to realize that all food equipment and utensils must be properly cleaned and sanitized. While cleaning will remove dirt and particles left on the surface, sanitizing is necessary to reduce the number of bacteria on the surface to safe levels. In addition to properly washing, rinsing and sanitizing food preparation equipment and utensils, all surfaces which come into contact with food, such as countertops, food preparation areas and buffets, should be regularly cleaned to prevent the spread of bacteria and eliminate the possibility of cross-contamination. All surfaces that come into contact with food should be washed, rinsed and sanitized:

- After each use.
- When you begin working with another type of food.
- Anytime you are interrupted during a task and the tools or items you have been working with may have become contaminated.
- At four-hour intervals if the areas or items are in constant use.

**For more information about operating a food establishment,  
contact your local health department.**