



Bridging the Gap (Manchester)

Food Safety Policy & Procedure

Registered Charity Number: 1170952

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every 2 years or in line with any food safety or health guidance issued. This will ensure this document remains current and fit for purpose.

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with Bridging the Gap's: -

- **Manual Handling Policy & Procedure**
- **Health & Safety Policy & Procedure**
- **Pest Control Policy & Procedure**

NEW POLICY: 2nd August 2023

Reviewed by: Lynda Mason & Michelle McHale

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1. Definitions

The terms food hygiene and food safety are sometimes used interchangeably but technically, they are not the same thing. Food 'hygiene' and 'safety' have different meanings and encompass different principles.

Food safety is a management system that is applied by a food business to ensure that hazards are controlled to acceptable levels. Food safety is concerned with all types of hazards. It includes a system of corrective actions, monitoring, and ways to achieve safe operations.

Safe food is food that is free of contaminants and will not cause illness or harm.

Food hygiene is a set of food manufacturing practices that aim to minimise biological food hazards through safe and clean operations in order to protect public health from foodborne diseases. Food hygiene is a crucial aspect of ensuring food safety and preventing foodborne illnesses.

Food hygiene is more than just cleanliness. It involves all measures necessary to ensure the safety and wholesomeness of food during: -

- preparation
- processing
- manufacture
- storage
- transportation
- distribution
- handling
- sale
- supply.

Ambient or 'shelf-stable foods' can typically be safely *stored at room temperature* within a *sealed container*. They generally have a longer shelf life than other food types and include: -

- a lot of dry food items
- tinned and glass items.

Non-ambient foods & chilled storage cannot safely be stored at room temperature and are required to be *refrigerated below 8° C*. Chilled storage prevents harmful bacteria from developing. Typically, chilled storage is needed for food items such as:-

- ready to eat sandwiches
- chilled rather than frozen ready meals
- foods that have a *use-by date* such as dairy products & fresh meats
- other items that must be refrigerated.

2. Scope, Aims and Responsibilities of this Policy & Procedure

Scope

Bridging the Gap (BTG), in its capacity as a food bank, is not involved in all the above aspects of food hygiene, such as processing, manufacture and sale. However, increasingly as BTG's operations move towards offering additional food items, beyond what is commonly included in a standard food parcel, it has become involved in new activities, such as: -

- receiving (sometimes unsolicited), transporting, handling & distributing donated fresh food items, for example through harvest festival collections or from 'Fair Share' and other food suppliers like Barbakan for bread
- food preparation, for example where snacks are offered at food hub sessions
- preparing food for 'Holiday Hunger' lunch boxes
- handling certain fresh food items going into Christmas food hampers.

Aims

BTG aims to apply similar food hygiene and handling standards to those expected in the wider food industry, even though formal documentation and training may not always be expected.

Responsibilities

All BTG staff and volunteers are required to know what is expected of them in respect of food safety and food hygiene and to strictly follow the guidance as laid out in this policy and procedure.

The Project Manager and Warehouse Co-ordinator will ensure that all volunteers are made aware of food safety and hygiene standards as part of their induction.

All staff will be trained to a Level 2 of a Food Safety and Hygiene course and will be expected to attend an annual refresher course.

All volunteers will be trained/instructed in food hygiene and safety to a level appropriate to their work activities.

3. Food Safety and Hygiene Legislation & Guidance

The objectives of Food Safety Law is to set minimum standards and to enforce these standards.

It is important to be aware that the handling of fresh or non-ambient items always involves increased risk, and specific legislation applies to it. For example, it is

unlawful to pass on anything 'unsuitable' for human consumption.

The main legislation to be aware of is: -

- [Food Safety Act 1990 - Legislation.gov.uk](#) provides the framework for all food legislation in England, Wales and Scotland
- [The Food Safety and Hygiene \(England\) Regulations 2013 \(as amended\)](#) provides for the enforcement of certain provisions of retained EU law Regulation (EC) 178/2002 and for the food hygiene legislation.

3.1 Local Authority Environmental Health Officers

Environmental Health Officers have a duty to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and to protect public health. They carry out the enforcement role of food safety regulation.

There is a requirement to inform the local Environmental Health Officer (EHO), in writing, if it is intended to regularly handle fresh or non-ambient foods so that the EHO can give further instructions.

BTG's warehouses are registered with the local Environmental Health departments.

3.2 The Food Standards Agency (FSA)

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for food safety and food hygiene in England. However, local authorities are responsible for monitoring and enforcing food safety regulations in their local area, to ensure that standards are met. The FSA has useful information on its website. [Food Standards Agency - GOV.UK](#)

3.3 The Trussell Trust's Guidance & Requirements

As a food bank affiliated to The Trussell Trust, BTG has to observe the Trust's recommendations and requirements in this area of its work.

The Trussell Trust has undertaken to advise the foodbank network, via its 'Weekly Update', when it becomes aware of changes to legislation or guidance that relates to fresh food, primarily the handling of fruit, vegetables, eggs, bread and chilled milk.

The Trust requires BTG to keep a record of training and to review this each year, with key personnel receiving periodic refresher-training. This training record will be inspected by the Trussell Trust when reviewing BTG's other records and documentation.

4. Purpose of this Policy & Procedure

Every consumer has the right to safe and good quality food. However, now and then, people get sick from consuming unsafe food.

This policy & procedure aims to ensure that BTG follows expected food safety and hygiene standards in order to avoid the risk of food contamination leading to people falling sick.

5. Food Safety Risks

These are divided into two categories: -

i) High-Risk Foods

High-risk foods are ready-to-eat foods, which, under favourable conditions, support the multiplication of pathogenic bacteria and are intended for consumption without treatment, for example, cooking that would destroy such organisms.

High-risk foods are most likely to be involved in cases of food poisoning.

Examples of high-risk foods include: -

- milk & dairy produce
- cooked meat & meat products
- sea food
- cooked rice

ii) Low-Risk Foods

Low-risk foods are rarely implicated in food poisoning and may be stored, suitably packaged, at ambient temperatures. Most food handled by BTG falls within this category. The food is likely to have been processed and packaged and may be dry or have a high sugar, salt or acidic content.

Examples of low-risk foods include: -

- Canned food, such as pulses, tomatoes, fish
- Preserved food, such as jam, sauces
- Dried food with little moisture, such as flour, rice, biscuits & bread
- Acid foods, such as vinegar
- Fermented products, such as kimchi & sauerkraut
- Foods with high fat/sugar content, such as chocolate
- Salty foods such as crisps

5.1 Food Labelling Dates

Food items are usually labelled with either a 'Use By' date or 'Best Before' date.

The **'Use By' Date** indicates the latest date by which the food item should be consumed by. After this date the food item is not safe to eat. It is illegal to use food after its 'use by' date.

The **'Best Before' Date** indicates that food quality reduces after this date.

6. **Non-Ambient Food**

Food that cannot be safely stored at room temperature (that is 'non-ambient') must be chilled or it could make the eventual consumer sick.

BTG will therefore make sure that staff and volunteers have appropriate food hygiene training, that proper procedures, standards and records are in place and that they are followed.

7. **Warehouse Procedures**

There are certain daily, weekly, monthly and annual tasks and procedures that must be followed to ensure the warehouse is compliant with health and safety/ environmental health requirements.

The Warehouse Co-ordinator or lead staff member must make sure all volunteers understand and follow the warehouse procedures.

BTG will ensure that: -

- environmental health requirements regarding food hygiene and storage are in place
- its warehouses are registered with the Environmental Health Service
- it signs up to receive 'Food Alerts' from the Food Standard Agency (FSA)
- all staff and volunteers receive appropriate, mandatory training in food safety and food hygiene. This will be delivered either via BTG's on-line training platform 'Assemble' or by in-person training arranged by BTG
- copies of certificates to record food safety and hygiene training completed by their employees and volunteers will be kept.

7.1 Food Storage:

BTG's Warehouse Co-ordinator will ensure that food is properly stored in order to: -

- keep it safe
- protect it from harmful bacteria and chemicals.

Different types of food will need to be stored in different ways. The majority of BTG's food stock however, is contained within tins and jars, so may be safely stored on open shelving.

Other items contained within packaging that could be damaged in some way, including by pests, must be kept in clean, sealable containers on the warehouse shelves. Items falling into this category include pasta, sugar, biscuits, rice and flour.

BTG's Warehouse Co-ordinator will inspect and ensure that the warehouse premises and equipment are kept clean and in good condition by carrying out the following activities: -

- disinfecting food and hand-contact surfaces at the end of each shift
- making sure any spills are swept/cleaned up immediately
- hoovering and mopping warehouse floors on a weekly basis
- cleaning and disinfecting empty containers prior to filling with food
- wiping down crates being used for fresh food prior to use
- wiping down shelving when it becomes empty
- wiping down all shelving at the time that stocktaking takes place

The Warehouse Co-ordinator has responsibility for ensuring that all volunteers are aware of, and apply, appropriate warehouse standards and procedures. Warehouse volunteers will be asked to assist the Warehouse Co-ordinator in maintaining ongoing cleanliness and in completing the 'Warehouse Cleaning Checklist' https://docs.google.com/document/d/13-Zh6cv2wsDkcSyPUfbB6ZQPao0MqYD7/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=114640216576498020402&rtpof=true&sd=true at the end of each shift.

7.2 Stock Control

All donations/deliveries must be inspected as soon as possible on arrival so that any unfit or contaminated foods can be disposed of or segregated immediately. This is particularly important in respect of non-ambient food stuff.

The remaining stock should then be sorted through carefully before being stored ready for future distribution. The purpose of this activity is to identify and remove

items that are damaged and/or out-of-date. If alcohol, or products containing alcohol, has been donated, this should be removed from stock and must not be distributed to people coming to the food bank.

The remaining products should have their 'Best Before' month and year (for example, 7/23 for July 2023) written clearly on the top or side of the packaging, as appropriate to its positioning on shelves or as instructed by BTG's Warehouse Co-ordinator. The purpose of re-dating products is to make checking the date easier and quicker when picking items for food parcels.

Products should then be organised by type and 'use by' date and stored on the appropriate warehouse shelf. It is essential that the oldest 'use by' products are placed at the back of shelves, so as to avoid food items unnecessarily having to be disposed of because the 'use by' date has expired before distribution was possible.

7.3 Out-of-Date and Damaged Provisions

Food that is badly damaged and/or out-of-date must not be included in the food parcels that are given out. This is based on guidance from Trading Standards and is often stipulated by insurance companies too.

Furthermore, BTG wants to show people who have been referred to the food bank that they are important and valued by giving them the best food that we can.

Short-dated items:

That is, food items that have less than one month to the 'best before' date. These items should be used immediately for people being referred. If there is too much short-date stock to use, the Warehouse Co-ordinator may decide to offer it to another local organisation who would be able to make use of these items.

Items within one week of its 'best before' date should not be put in food parcels but instead placed in the crate in warehouse (Room 2) to subsequently be offered on the miscellaneous table provided at each weekly food hub session.

Out-of-date items:

i) ***Food items more than three months past their 'best before' date***

These should be put in the labelled box for out-of-date/ damaged items in the main warehouse (Room 9), so that the Warehouse Co-ordinator can dispose of them, as appropriate.

ii) Food items less than three months past their 'best before' date:

If the item is undamaged (and isn't milk or fruit juice), it should be placed in a separate container and made available to volunteers, people referred to food hub sessions or other charities, on a 'help yourself' basis. The recipients should be verbally made aware at the food hub sessions of the risks involved in taking food that is past its 'best before' date.

A slip of paper informing recipients about Best Before End Dates is added to all food parcels, as follows: -

“BBE dates: All items in this parcel have been marked with their “best before end” (BBE) date. Please check them and ensure that food is consumed (preferably) before the BBE date, or as soon as possible where the date has passed, and certainly within 3 months of this date being reached.”

Damaged food items:

Packaged food (such as pasta, cereals etc.) is considered damaged if the packaging has been broken and air can get to the contents. Broken packets of flour/pasta etc. must be removed from the warehouse immediately in case they are contaminated with pests or mites. They may be disposed of in the dustbins.

Tinned food is considered damaged if there is: -

- any damage to, or dent in, the sealed rim of the tin
- any sign of rust on the tin
- large dents or dents that have caused a crease in the tin
- popping i.e. the end of the tin has bulged up due to gas pressure in the tin

Jars are considered damaged if the lid button moves up and down.

Cartons are considered damaged if there are any leaks, especially at the opener, or any appearance of swelling.

7.4 Food Items Requiring Refrigerated Storage

Sometimes food is donated, particularly from supermarkets, that requires refrigerated storage in order to be kept safe to eat. BTG unfortunately does not have the necessary refrigerated storage facilities to keep and distribute this type of food.

Also BTG will have no way of knowing how long the food has been unrefrigerated for before being donated.

Supermarkets are advised not to donate food requiring refrigeration but, where items falling into this category are received and they are obviously still chilled, they should be put straight into the fridge and offered only to volunteers; otherwise the food should be disposed of immediately.

7.5 Disposal of Food Waste

There are rules about the way certain types of food waste must be collected and disposed of.

Food waste (and other rubbish) must be put in containers that can be closed. These containers must be of appropriate construction, kept in sound condition, be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect.

Waste must be removed from rooms where fresh food is present as quickly as reasonably possible.

7.6 Pest Control

BTG's Warehouse Co-ordinator will ensure that: -

- the warehouses are regularly inspected for signs of pests
- effective pest control procedures are established since these are essential for keeping pests out of the warehouses and preventing the spread of harmful bacteria
- any equipment, surfaces, or utensils that appear to have been touched by pests are washed, disinfected and dried to stop harmful bacteria from spreading
- food that appears to have been touched by pests in any way is thrown away

All volunteers are equally responsible for being vigilant for signs of pests/pest activity. They must report any evidence of such activity immediately to the Warehouse Co-ordinator or other member of staff.

7.7 Product Recall

BTG is registered to receive product recall alerts from the Food Standards Agency. This is where concerns about actual, or suspected, threats to the safety, quality or

integrity of certain food items require an intervention in order to protect consumers. In such circumstances the food manufacturer usually recalls a particular product if it has already been distributed to potential consumers.

When such food safety incidents occur BTG will receive a notification that the food item(s) must be either returned or disposed of.

The Warehouse Co-ordinator must act immediately to check and remove any such products from the warehouses or food parcels that have already been prepared. After product recall notices have been acted on they are kept in a file in the Room 2 warehouse.

7.8 Distributing Emergency Food Parcels

When making up emergency food parcels the volunteer/staff member should, in the main, select food items with the shortest 'best before'/'use by' date, as part of good stock management. (Although to make up the most appropriate parcel for a particular referral this may not always be possible.)

An information slip should be placed in each food parcel pointing out that it may contain short-dated products. The client must therefore always check their parcel and ensure that food is consumed before any 'Use by' date given and as soon as possible where a 'Best before' date has passed and certainly within three months of this date being reached.

7.9 Handling of Fresh Food Produce, Bread & Bakery Goods

Increasingly BTG has been receiving donations of the above goods. Particular care is required when handling fresh produce & baked goods. All volunteers and staff will therefore be required to observe the following rules: -

- To always wash/sanitise hands before handling this type of food
- To wipe down with antibacterial spray all work surfaces and crates to be used when processing these food types
- To wear protective gloves when handling these food types, if they are unpackaged
- To use clean, new, paper or plastic bags to repack items

8. Food Preparation

The amount of food preparation that BTG undertakes is fairly minimal. It arises at food hub distribution sessions where clients are invited to have a drink and a snack, such as a toasted sandwich, and during 'Holiday Hunger' sessions when lunch bag sandwiches are prepared.

On these occasions all volunteers and staff will be required to observe the following rules: -

- To clean and disinfect any work surface and chopping boards to be used
- To disinfect the handles on any fridge door and sink taps used
- To always wash/sanitise hands before preparing the actual food
- To wear protective gloves when preparing food
- To observe all the points in respect of personal hygiene set out in section 9 of this policy and procedure
- To wash and rinse all utensils, chopping boards and crockery used and, if possible, to leave these items to air dry or to use a clean dry cloth or paper towels.

9. Transporting Food Procedures

When food is transported from BTG's central premises to another venue or from a cash-and-carry to its warehouses, the staff member/volunteer must prevent it from becoming contaminated, for example with dirt or bacteria.

Prevention of cross-contamination of food during transportation

In order to reduce the risks of cross-contamination the following steps will be taken: -

- BTG's Project Managers will ensure that the delivery van, or any other vehicle used to transport food, is kept clean. Whoever undertakes collections or deliveries will undertake a visual inspection of the cleanliness of the delivery vehicle before transporting goods
- The inside of the vehicle will be cleaned at the end of each working day; that is, it will be swept out and any spillages wiped up
- No meat or dairy products will be accepted from donors since BTG does not have a refrigerated vehicle to keep this type of produce at the correct temperature

- Non-food items, for example: toiletries, chemical cleaning products, washing powder etc, and food items will be placed in separate containers during transportation
- All bakery goods will be covered and sealed in plastic bags

9. Personal Hygiene

Food handlers have a moral and legal responsibility to observe high standards of personal hygiene to ensure they do not contaminate food. Food handlers are potentially the most serious hazard there is in food preparation.

The main ways that food poisoning bacteria can be transferred from person to food is via: -

- hands
- boils
- septic cuts
- spots
- used First Aid dressings

In addition, a small number of food poisoning bacteria may be present on/in the skin, hair, mouth, nose and ears. Whilst coughing, sneezing and smoking around food are likely to increase the risk of contamination. Similarly, so are bad habits such as nose picking, biting fingernails and scratching one's head.

To keep food safe, it is essential that all staff and volunteers are vigilant in respect of:

- handwashing (see below)
- suitable clothing, that is, it is clean & protective
- their fitness for work (see below)

Effective handwashing is extremely important to help prevent harmful bacteria from spreading from peoples' hands. All staff that work with fresh food must wash their hands for 20 seconds (**see Appendix 1** - a correct hand washing guide): -

- when in the kitchen or food preparation area
- before preparing food
- after touching raw food
- after handling food waste or emptying a bin
- after cleaning
- after blowing their nose or combing their hair
- after using the toilet
- after putting on a wound plaster, which should always be coloured blue to enable easy visibility if they become detached

- after touching phones, light switches, door handles

Staff should dry their hands on a disposable towel. This is because harmful bacteria can spread on wet or damp hands. Use a disposable towel to turn off the tap.

Preparing or handling fresh food: -

- keep hair tied back or wear a suitable head covering such as a hat or hair net
- do not wear watches or jewellery (except a wedding band)
- do wear the protective gloves provided and replace them at regular intervals and always when taking breaks

Fitness for work means that a volunteer/staff member must not handle food if they: -

- are suffering from, or likely to be, carrying a disease that could be transmitted through food
- have infected wounds, skin infections or sores
- have diarrhoea

If any of these apply the volunteer/staff member must tell the Project Manager/Team Lead about it immediately.

Staff/volunteers with diarrhoea or vomiting should not return to work/volunteering until they have had no symptoms for 48 hours.

For further information please consult the Fitness to Work Guidance.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1puXaXfyC7piut7xVHIWVqihyc722mJti/view?usp=drive_link

10. Inspections and Food Hygiene Ratings

If food is served or supplied directly to the public, the organisation may be covered by the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

An organisation's rating will be based on the food hygiene standards seen on the day of inspection. Hygiene ratings range from 5 (very good) to 0 (urgent improvement is required).

BTG is registered with, and inspected by, the local Council's Environmental Health department. At the date of this policy BTG's hygiene rating is level 5 [Manchester South Central Foodbank | Rating Business Details | Food Standards Agency](#)

11. Food Allergies and Food Intolerance

An increasing number of people need to avoid eating certain types of food because

they are allergic or intolerant to certain food types or food additives. These reactions may range from mild symptoms to life-threatening emergencies and may involve the respiratory system, gastro-intestinal tract, the skin or central nervous system.

Eating safely when living with a food allergy is a challenge. In the UK, there are approximately: -

- 1-2% of adults and 5-8% of children who live with a food allergy
- 1 in 100 people have coeliac disease

The only way to manage the condition is avoidance of the food that causes a reaction. Food businesses in the UK must inform consumers under food law if they include any of [14 key allergens](#), for example tree nuts, milk or cereals, in the food and drink that they produce.

Food Allergies

A food allergy is when the body's immune system (which is the body's defence against infection) mistakenly treats the protein in food as a threat. The body responds to this threat by releasing a number of chemicals in the body. These chemicals cause the symptoms of an allergic reaction.

The most severe and potentially life-threatening reaction to an allergen is anaphylaxis.

Food Intolerance

A food intolerance is more common than a food allergy. They do not involve the immune system. Instead, a food intolerance can cause difficulty digesting certain foods. Food intolerances are thought to affect 1 in 10 people.

Coeliac disease

This is a serious auto-immune condition triggered by consuming gluten, which has a severe impact on a person's ability to absorb nutrients from food. Gluten are proteins found in wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt and Khorasan wheat.

Keeping 'food allergic' customers safe

BTG will ensure that its key staff are allergen trained.

In addition BTG staff/volunteers will follow the allergen information rules by: -

- providing accurate allergen information, where appropriate, to help people with allergies make safe choices, and manage their condition effectively
- handling and managing food allergens adequately in the kitchen when fresh food is being prepared, for example: -

- frequent, effective handwashing to avoid allergen cross- contamination
- taking care when disposing of allergenic ingredients & products
- by storing allergenic foods separately
- checking for allergens when packing food for a customer who has informed BTG that they have particular allergies/intolerances
- including an allergen advice note in appropriate food parcels informing the client that, whilst BTG's staff/volunteers have taken care to check items in the parcel for allergen food ingredients that the client has informed the referral agency/BTG about, the client must also check, before consuming any of the food provided, that it is safe for them to eat
- keeping an allergen information record, where BTG provides holiday half-term lunches. In addition the activity lead person will be asked to sign a form confirming that BTG has been given all allergen information before food is prepared
https://docs.google.com/document/d/15HEMYrSkHJq8xLYn0aq9FmB6dmpoA5Oj/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=114640216576498020402&rtpof=true&sd=true
- ensuring any individual sandwich made for half-term lunches is labelled with allergen information
- displaying a food allergy/intolerance notice at any session where food is being prepared
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_OtcmUBOBR0MRJxqx-ZwjNT4cE526tWw/view?usp=drive_link
- using allergy information recipe sheets/cards, as produced by the Food Standards Agency, to help identify possible allergens in food prepared by BTG staff/volunteers.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m7CwC6in95E0IK0I_9dZ5VS_bDom2fgx/view?usp=drive_link

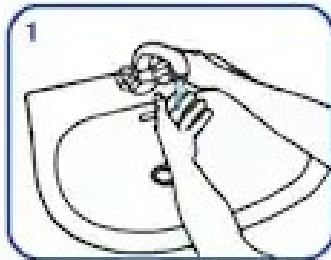
12. Risk Assessments

BTG will complete a risk assessment, which will include food safety aspects on an annual basis or sooner if required.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gB0YQFYfd2HA6jJ2kV3H2Ry_D4I6G8FJ/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=114640216576498020402&rtpof=true&sd=true

APPENDIX 1 - HANDWASHING GUIDE

Hand-washing technique with soap and water



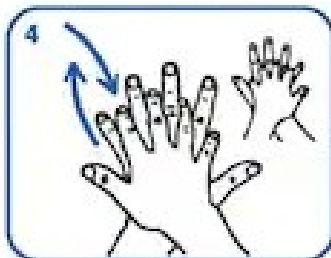
1 Wet hands with water



2 Apply enough soap to cover all hand surface



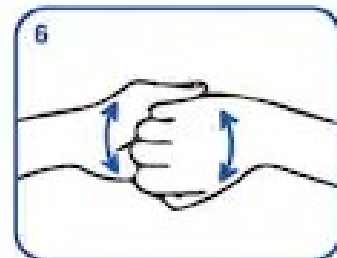
3 Rub hands palm to palm



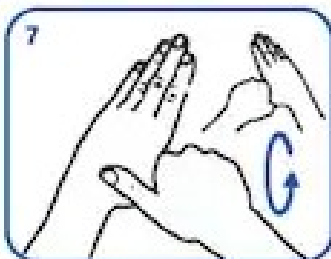
4 Rub back of each hand with palm of other hand with fingers interlaced



5 Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



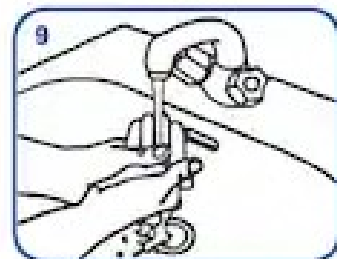
6 Rub with back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlaced



7 Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using a rotational movement



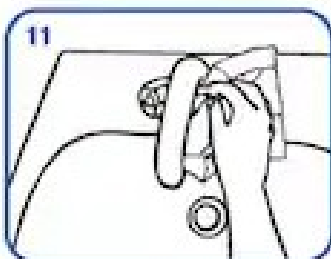
8 Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion



9 Rinse hands with water



10 Dry thoroughly with a single-use towel



11 Use towel to turn off faucet



12 Hand washing should take 15-30 seconds

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