

Dishwashing in a Community Kitchen

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In community kitchens where there is no dishwasher available, it is important to stick to a few simple rules for hand-washing dishes. Proper technique will keep your dishes clean and keep you from getting sick! There are 5 main steps to manual dishwashing:

1. **Scraping:** Dirty dishes need a home of their own—a place to scrape and sort them before they are washed—a counter right next to the sink is the best place. And remember to keep the dishes moving in the same direction in the kitchen—from dirty on one side of the sink to clean on the other.
2. **Washing:** In a small kitchen it may not be possible to have the three compartments that are needed to wash, rinse and sanitize. So, it is important that you utilize what you do have. If there is only one sink, you can use it for washing. Use warm water, detergent and scrubbing to remove oils and food debris from the dishes. Here, water temperature is important to kill germs and to help the detergent remove stuck on food bits. Water should be at least 44°C (110°F) or higher, but not too hot that it scalds, and if the water cools down the sink must be refilled with hot water and detergent.
3. **Rinsing:** It is important to rinse dishes in clean warm water to remove soap and food residue—this gives the sanitizer a clean surface to work on. If you do not rinse, the sanitizer will not be able to do its job properly. If two sinks are available, the second one can be used for rinsing. But if only one is available, a large bucket can be used instead.
4. **Sanitizing:** This step is very important. It can prevent illness by killing any leftover germs that may have survived the washing. In a sink or large (clean) bucket, add one capful of chlorine bleach to 24°C (75°F) water and let the cleaned dishes soak for 45 seconds.
5. **Air Drying:** Air drying is recommended for all dishes. Adequate space is needed for proper air drying of all dishes. If towel drying is absolutely necessary, the towels must be freshly laundered and designated for drying only, otherwise you risk re-contaminating the dishes.

Follow all of the 5 important steps in your dish-washing procedure (hang signs above the sink to promote this) for safe, clean and germ free dishes!

Disclaimer

This article expresses the opinion of the Environmental Health Program of the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). Contact your local Environmental Health Officer in your Health Authority to find out more about washing dishes in your community setting.