

INDUSTRY HEALTH PACK

RESTAURANT HEALTH PACK

Fit food handlers, healthy hands and a safe kitchen



Food handlers wash their hands dozens of times a shift, work beside fryers and slicers, and stay on their feet for hours. This pack sets out R638 and the OHS rules for kitchens and front of house, the medicals restaurants use, and the first aid and return to work steps that matter on a busy night.

WHAT THE LAW ASKS OF YOU

These are the South African rules that matter most for a typical restaurant employer. They are summarised from the regulations themselves; read the gazetted text for the full duties.

LAW	WHAT IT ASKS OF THE EMPLOYER
R638 of 22/06/2018 (GG 41730), regulation 11	Food must not be handled by a person with unclean hands or clothes, or with an uncovered infected sore, cut or abrasion. A person with a condition in its contagious stage likely to be transmitted through food (such as jaundice, diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, sore throat with fever, or discharges from the ear, eye or nose) may only resume handling food after a medical practitioner certifies them fit. ^[1]
R638, premises	Food premises need hand-washing facilities and a certificate of acceptability from the local authority. The certificate covers the building, not the staff. ^[1]
General Safety Regulations, regulation 3 (as substituted by GN 6907)	First aid requirements for the workplace, including a stocked first aid kit and trained first aiders. ^[2]
Hazardous Chemical Agents Regulations, 2021 (GN R280), regulation 7	Cleaning agents and degreasers such as bleach and ammonia. Medical surveillance where an employee may be exposed to a listed agent or the practitioner recommends it. Initial evaluation before or within 14 days of starting; then at intervals not exceeding two years. ^[3]
Physical Agents Regulations, 2024 (GN 5952, as amended by GN 7149 of 20/02/2026)	Heat in kitchens and cold in walk-in fridges and freezers. Risk assessment at least every 24 months, medical screening where the assessment calls for it, records for 40 years. They replaced the Environmental Regulations for Workplaces, 1987 on 06/09/2026. ^[4,5,6]
Ergonomics Regulations, 2019 (GN R1589)	Assess and control ergonomic risk, train workers, and provide medical surveillance where indicated. Lifting trays, crates and stock, and long hours standing. ^[7]
OHS Act 85 of 1993, section 8	Provide and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to health. ^[8]

Numbers in red refer to the sources on the last page. This pack is general information, not legal or medical advice.

THE MEDICALS **YOUR TEAM NEEDS**

Medical surveillance follows the exposure. Your risk assessment decides who is tested and for what, and your practitioner sets the programme. A typical restaurant employer plans for three moments in a worker's career.

WHEN	WHAT IT IS FOR
Pre-employment (baseline)	Before the person starts, or for chemical exposure immediately before or within 14 days of starting (HCA regulation 7). Sets the baseline that later results are compared with. ^[3,9]
Periodic	At the interval your risk assessment and occupational medicine practitioner set. For hazardous chemical agents, at intervals not exceeding two years unless the practitioner specifies otherwise. ^[3]
Exit	When the person leaves the job or the exposure. It closes the record and shows the worker's health at the end of exposure. ^[9]

Tests and certificates to plan for

TEST	NOTES
Food handler medical	Fitness and the health requirements that support your R638 hygiene duties, including a skin check of the hands. ^[10]
Return to work	After a contagious illness, a medical certificate of fitness to handle food (R638 reg 11). After a hand injury, the wound must be covered and an infected wound kept away from food. ^[1]
Chemical exposure	Screening for staff who use cleaning chemicals often, where the assessment calls for it. ^[11,3]
Musculoskeletal check	For back and shoulder strain from lifting. ^[11]
Forklift operator	Where a central kitchen or store uses one: vision, hearing and fitness. ^[11,12]



Planning medicals?

Tell us the headcount, the site and the exposures. A sales executive replies the same working day with a fixed-price proposal.^[13]

Request a quote:

carenetconsultants.co.za/forms/quote-request.html

THE MAIN RISKS, AND WHAT HELPS

Prevention starts at the source: remove or reduce the hazard first, then protect the person. Medicals check that the controls are working.

Illness passed through food

A sick handler can affect many customers.

Prevention: Clear reporting rule, no penalty for reporting, return only when certified fit.

Burns

Fryers, ovens and steam.

Prevention: Cool running water for 20 minutes, cover with cling film, medical help for serious burns.

Cuts

Knives and slicers.

Prevention: Firm pressure, clean, cover with a blue waterproof dressing; deep cuts need medical attention.

Cracked skin

Frequent washing; cracked skin is harder to keep clean.

Prevention: Suitable soap, drying and moisturiser; skin checks.

Chemicals

Bleach, degreasers and ammonia.

Prevention: Safety data sheets, gloves, never mix products.

Heat and strain

Hot kitchens, heavy trays, long shifts.

Prevention: Water, breaks, lifting aids, sensible rosters.



For your notice board

Our World Food Safety Day poster is part of the free Care Net Health Awareness Pack, with posters for the South African health calendar in A4, A3 and A0.

carenetconsultants.co.za/health-awareness-pack.html

YOUR ONE-PAGE CHECKLIST

Print it, tick it, and file it with your risk assessment. Anything left unticked is your next action.

- ☐ Certificate of acceptability displayed
- ☐ Hand-washing facilities stocked: soap, drying, moisturiser
- ☐ Food handler medicals for every handler, including casual staff
- ☐ Written rule: report vomiting, diarrhoea, fever or jaundice before shift
- ☐ Return to food handling only with a medical certificate of fitness
- ☐ Blue waterproof dressings and burn dressings in the first aid kit
- ☐ Trained first aider on every shift
- ☐ Safety data sheets for every cleaning product
- ☐ Kitchen heat and walk-in cold assessed
- ☐ Lifting and standing risks assessed
- ☐ Medical records stored confidentially (POPIA)
- ☐ Emergency numbers 10177 and 112 by the phone

Checked by: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

FIVE-MINUTE TOOLBOX TALK

THE FIRST TWO MINUTES

A fryer splash or a slicer slip happens fast. The first two minutes decide a lot. Here is what we all do.

1. Burn: cool under cool running water for 20 minutes. Cover with cling film. Get help for a serious burn.
2. Cut: firm pressure to stop the bleeding, clean, cover with a blue waterproof dressing.
3. Deep cuts, cuts that will not stop bleeding, or anything embedded: get medical help.
4. Tell the first aider and record the injury.
5. Sick with vomiting, diarrhoea or fever? Tell your manager before your shift. You return once a doctor says you are fit.
6. Look after your hands: dry them well and use the moisturiser. Cracked skin holds germs.

Talk it through

- Who is the first aider tonight?
- Where are the burn dressings?
- Who do we tell if we are sick?

Ambulance from
a landline

10177

Emergency from
a cellphone

112

Save both numbers in your phone today. Know where the first aid kit is and who the first aider is on your shift.

Talk given by: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Number attending: ____

HOW CARE NET CAN HELP

Food handler and staff medicals at four fixed clinics, or on site for groups of 10 or more. Every medical includes a risk-based exposure form and a review by an occupational health nursing practitioner, and is captured in My Clinic Online, our POPIA-aware record system.^[14]

4

fixed clinics

Walk-ins welcome. Busiest 8am to 2pm; afternoons are quieter. Saturdays for booked groups of more than 10.^[15]

16

mobile clinic units

From 10 employees on one site, Monday to Saturday. Most units carry inverters and battery packs.^[13]

Our fixed clinics

Midrand

875 16th Road Midrand, Unit 2 Alphen Square
North, Randjespark, Midrand, 1685
+27 60 070 2723

Elandsfontein

Cnr North Reef and Atlas Road, Shop 2 Delmond
Centre, Elandsfontein, 1429
+27 60 070 2723

Brackenfell, Cape Town

Cnr Kruis and Capricorn Way, Unit 15 Reserve 1,
Western Cape, 7560
+27 60 070 2723

Gqeberha

40 6th Avenue, Gqeberha, 6045
+27 60 070 2723

Get in touch

Request a quote

carenetconsultants.co.za/forms/quote-request.html

A sales executive replies the same working day with a fixed-price proposal.^[13]

Book medicals

carenetconsultants.co.za/forms/booking-request.html

Call or WhatsApp

+27 60 070 2723 | wa.me/27600702723

Email

salesdesk@carenetconsultants.co.za

Ambulance from a
landline

10177

Emergency from a
cellphone

112

In a medical emergency call these first. Care Net clinics are not emergency services.

SOURCES

Accessed October 2026. Legal summaries are drawn from the gazetted regulations on gov.za, labour.gov.za and health.gov.za, and from Acts Online. Health facts come from the named organisations. Care Net service details come from carenetconsultants.co.za.

1. R638 of 2018: Regulations Governing General Hygiene Requirements for Food Premises, the Transport of Food and Related Matters (GG 41730, 22/06/2018), health.gov.za. <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Regulations-governing-general-hygiene-requirements-for-food-premises-the-transport-of-food-and-related-matters-R638-of-2018.pdf>
2. General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 3 First aid (Acts Online, as substituted by GN 6907). https://www.acts.co.za/occupational-health-and-safety-act-/gsr-nr1031_3_first_aid_emergency_equipment_and_procedures
3. Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents, 2021 (GN R280, GG 44348, 29/03/2021), labour.gov.za. <https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Regulations%20and%20Notices/Regulations/Occupational%20Health%20and%20Safety/Regulations%20for%20Hazardous%20Chemical%20Agents%2C%202021%20Notice%20R11263%20GG44348%2029%20March%202021.pdf>
4. Physical Agents Regulations, 2024 (GN 5952, GG 52226, 06/03/2025), gov.za. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202503/52226gon5952.pdf
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7. Ergonomics Regulations, 2019 (GN R1589, GG 42894, 06/12/2019), gov.za. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201912/42894rg10177gon1589.pdf
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9. Care Net Consultants: Occupational health (pre-employment, periodic and exit medicals). <https://carenetconsultants.co.za/occupational-health.html>
10. Care Net Consultants: Food handling medicals. <https://carenetconsultants.co.za/food-handling-medicals.html>
11. Care Net Consultants: Restaurant occupational health guide. <https://carenetconsultants.co.za/restaurant-occupational-health-guide.html>
12. Driven Machinery Regulations, 2015 (GN R540, GG 38905), gov.za. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201506/38905rg10454gon540.pdf
13. Care Net Consultants: Mobile clinics. <https://carenetconsultants.co.za/mobile-clinics.html>
14. Care Net Consultants: Fixed clinics. <https://carenetconsultants.co.za/fixed-clinics.html>
15. Care Net Consultants: Contact us and clinic addresses. <https://carenetconsultants.co.za/contact.html>
16. Western Cape Government: Know who you can call in an emergency (10177 ambulance, 112 from a cellphone). <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/know-who-you-can-call-emergency>
17. WHO: World Hand Hygiene Day. <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-hand-hygiene-day>
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19. Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013, sections 26 and 27 (gov.za). https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/3706726-11act4of2013protectionofpersonalinformationcorrect.pdf

This pack is general information for employers. It is not legal or medical advice. Read the regulations for the full requirements, and speak to a qualified practitioner about individual health concerns. Worker medical information is special personal information under POPIA: keep it confidential and share fitness outcomes, not diagnoses.

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