



# DRAFT ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE & WORKERS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

## Role of social partners in improving working conditions: practical advice and guidance for workers

*Processing food, especially meat, may expose workers to various health hazards – i.e. exposure to bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics or to other antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms (fungi, viruses and protozoa).*

*This “practical advice and guidance” document addresses the role of workers in minimising the risk of exposure to antimicrobial resistant agents. The focus of this guidance is mainly on hygiene, which clearly is a responsibility of workers too.*

*However, it should be noted that hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment are just two of the measures to tackle the risk of exposure to biological agents. First and foremost, the risks of working with biological agents should be assessed by the employer (risk assessment), and then be reduced by means of technical or organisational measures, notably by means of a safe design of work processes.*

*The use of protective measures such as good hygiene and the use of protective clothing should be part of a broader strategy of risk reduction.*

*Note that good hygiene practices are not only important to protect your own health, but also the health of your family!! Don't take your work home!*

- A. **Ask your employer for a copy of the risk assessment**, notably addressing the risk of exposure to antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms.
- B. **Ask your employer what has been done to minimise the risk of exposure to antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms.**
- C. **Make sure that your employer provides you with adequate protective clothing and washing facilities.**
  - Your employer is responsible to keep your cleaned and checked clothing and protective equipment in a defined place. The **employer** must ensure that such clothing and protective equipment is decontaminated and cleaned or, if necessary, destroyed.

**You shall not be charged for the costs of such measures.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Article 8 (3) of the Biological Agents Directive 2000/54/EC

#### D. Clean contaminated equipment and surfaces

Cleaning contaminated equipment and surfaces with detergent-based cleaners or specific disinfectants is effective at removing antimicrobial resistant micro-organisms from the environment. Check the disinfectant product's label on the back of the container and ensure an appropriate disinfection procedure introduced by your employer. Most, if not all, disinfectant manufacturers will provide a list of micro-organisms on their label that their product can destroy.

#### E. Practice good hygiene:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, in particular before every lunch and/or smoking break.



- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Do not carry on working with open infections or wounds.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as uniforms and personal protective equipment.
- Do not eat or drink in working areas where there is a risk of contamination by biological agents
- Keep pregnant or other vulnerable workers away from potentially contaminated areas
- Minimise physical contact with other persons unless you're sure that you do not carry contaminants

F. **Gloving:** Wear disposable gloves when touching blood, body fluids and contaminated items. After disposing your gloves in the dedicated places, wash hands immediately.



G. **Masking:** Wear a mask and face shield during procedures that are likely to generate splashes or droplets of blood and body fluids. Make sure to wear an accurate hairnet to avoid the displacement of potential contaminated fluids.

H. **Laundry:** Used linen soiled with blood or body fluids need to be handled, transported and processed on leaving the working area to prevent skin exposure, contamination of regular clothing and the transfer of micro-organisms to co-workers. Change your complete clothes after each workday.

I. **Report any accident where biological agents are involved** to the person in charge of health issues, and make sure you and your potentially affected co-workers are examined.

J. **Treatment:** Seek early treatment of possible infections from the doctor or person responsible for health surveillance. Inform your potentially similar exposed colleagues, so that they are offered the same protective health surveillance.

K. **Discuss with your employer, occupational physician and/or the workers' representatives what may be learned from the incident.**

#### Sources:

MRSA and the Workplace. Workplace Safety and Health Topics. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, USA; <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/mrsa/>

Directive 2000/54/EC on the protection of workers from risks related to exposure to biological agents at work, 18 September 2000; <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32000L0054&from=EN>