Taking a Hand Swab for Micro Analysis

**Frequency…**
As per the department schedule

**Who is Responsible…**
- Person carrying out task
- Choose an item.

**Who can Help me…**
- Trained colleague

**Documentation…**
- Department Micro schedule.
- Sample Registration Record.

**Equipment …**
- Swab.

**Reference Sheets…**
- Booths Micro Limits

**Food/Health & Safety…**
- Food handlers whose results fail must be investigated and actioned promptly. The bacteria tested for can cause illness, therefore product may be affected.

**Important Information…**
The swabbing of hands on our food handling colleagues is carried out to validate the effectiveness of our hand washing techniques and the chemicals used. It also indicates where poor hygiene habits may be occurring.

**What you need to do…**
When taking swabs for laboratory analysis, it is imperative that hands and equipment are cleaned and sanitised.

1. Handswabs may be carried out on gloved or bare hands, prior to or during production after entering the factory (ensure this is indicated on the swab label).
2. Explain to your colleague the reasons why the hand swab process is carried out – to validate the handwashing techniques used and effectiveness of the handwashing chemicals.
3. Do not allow the person to wash their hands just because they are to be tested.
4. Open the swab only when you are ready to take the swab and always keep the open tube upright. Take care not to contaminate the end or shaft of the swab on anything other than what you are swabbing – their hand.
5. Whilst swabbing, use a twisting technique and move the swab across the palm covering as much of the palm as possible, also swab inbetween 1 or 2 of the fingers.
6. Return the swab into the tube and seal it shut.
7. Write the date, time, department and persons name on the label.
8. Send the swab to the laboratory same day. Store the sample in chilled conditions awaiting collection. Collections must have already been arranged with the laboratory.
9. The samples require registering with the laboratory. This can be done prior to taking the samples or afterwards. Send a copy of the sample registration with the samples to the laboratory.

**Results**
- Check the results against Booths Micro Limits.
- Log the results onto the schedule – pass, warning or fail.
- Upon receipt of a failure result, a retest must be taken within one week.
- If the retest results are within specification - no further action is required.
- If the retest results fail, then an investigation must be carried out by Technical and the production manager as to next steps.
- Bare in mind if the swab has been taken mid production, after handling waste or dirty items such as pallets – these may have an effect on the result.

**What if…**
I register the samples but don’t take or send the swab to the laboratory? As soon as possible contact the laboratory with the sample details and reference number and explain the situation. If you do not cancel the sample – a cost will be incurred and an invoice will be generated.
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