

Best practice guide

Vikan's guide to tool replacement

When do tools need to be replaced?

The condition of cleaning tools is critical to maintaining the integrity of a successful sanitation plan. Damaged cleaning tools can become a source of contamination, jeopardizing an organization's sanitation efforts, thus presenting a risk of foodborne illness for customers and/or a costly recall. To prevent this, it is important for a sanitation plan to include the routine inspection of cleaning tools, along with instructions on when and how to replace a tool.

Over time, all tools become worn or damaged and need to be replaced. However, it can sometimes be challenging to know when that is. Visual inspection is usually the easiest and best method for deciding this.

So, what should you look for?

The following instances provide examples of when tool replacement is either warranted or, due to critical hygiene-based concerns, imperative.

If a tool's material is...



it is time to **replace** it.

Cracks, gouges, and excessive wear create harborage points for microorganisms and allergens to collect. Bent or warped tools reduce cleaning efficiency and can potentially damage production equipment. Peeling, delamination, and splintering of materials increases the chances for foreign body contamination.

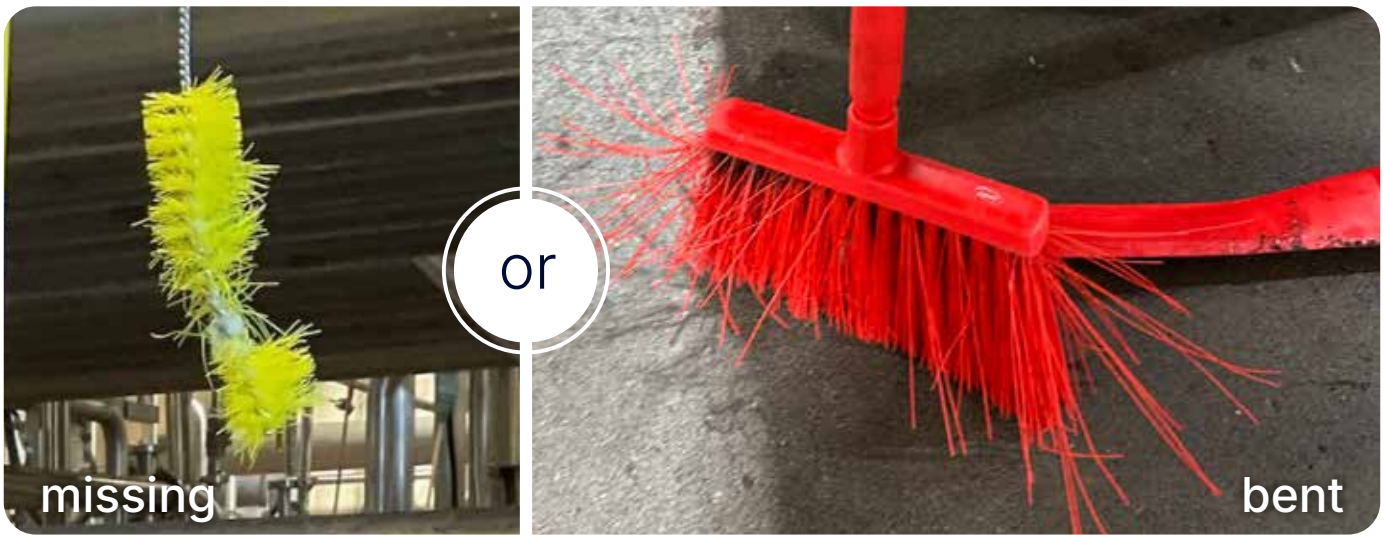
If a tool is...



it is time to **replace** it.

Makeshift tools often contain materials that are not food-contact compliant.
They also typically have unnecessary harborage points for allergens and microorganisms.
Broken tools can injure employees and damage equipment.

If a tool's bristles are...



it is time to **replace** it.

When bristles fall out, it becomes more likely that more will follow suit because bristle bundles are loosened, increasing the risk of foreign body contamination. Bent bristles reduce cleaning efficiency and allow debris to slip through brooms and brushes.

If a tool is **dirty**, but in **good condition**...





it is time to **clean** it.

Tool maintenance: Safety and efficiency

The benefits of having clean, well-maintained tools:

- Improves efficiency and effectiveness of cleaning
- Reduces the downtime required for cleaning
- Reduces the risk of foreign body contamination
- Minimises the risk of cross-contamination or cross-contact
- Protects/improves the reputation and income of your business

To minimise the risk of cleaning tools becoming a source of cross-contamination, they must be appropriately cleaned, disinfected, and maintained. With regard to this,

- Cleaning and disinfection methods/protocols should be developed and validated, as appropriate, based on risk assessment.
- Cleaning and disinfection of cleaning tools should be conducted to an appropriate, defined frequency/ schedule, based on risk assessment.
- Documentation and records of these actions should be kept so that they can be used internally and support audits and due diligence defence, if required.

Choosing a tool cleaning method



The methods and frequencies of cleaning tool decontamination will depend on many things, including:

- Tool being cleaned
- Type of contamination
- Risk level of the food being produced
- Type of food product/environment
- Frequency of cleanings
- Type of consumer and their risk level

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