Food and Kitchen Hygiene – Fact Sheets



WHAT ARE THE KEY STEPS TO PREVENTING FOOD-BORNE ILLNESSES?

The key steps are:

- Clean – keep yourself and work areas clean.
- Separate – keep raw meat and other raw animal products away from other foods.
- Cook – always properly cook and prepare foods.
- Chill – store foods appropriately both before and after cooking.

What are ways to keep you and work areas clean when handling food?

Poor cleaning and personal hygiene habits/practices can cause food contamination, food poisoning, and spread of infection.

- Wash hands before performing the next job function after touching other food, and after smoking, chewing tobacco, eating and drinking, taking out the garbage, changing diapers, touching body parts such as the mouth or going to the washroom.
- Wash hands before and after handling raw food, especially meat and poultry.
- Report immediately any symptoms of illness or infection to your supervisor. It may not be appropriate for you to handle food while you are sick.
- Cover any cuts with a bandage and wear clean gloves. However, do not wear rubber or latex gloves near open flames or other heat sources. Gloves may melt or catch fire. Change gloves if you touch anything that would normally require you to wash your hands.
- Wear hair nets to help prevent loose hair from falling on food. The average person loses about 50 hairs per day.
- Use tools or utensils to serve food whenever possible. Touch food with your hands as little as possible.
- Use a clean spoon each time you taste or sample food.
- Touch only the handles of flatware/utensils when setting the table.
- Do NOT wear jewellery in food preparation areas, especially rings; they may collect dirt or bacteria and make it harder to clean your hands. Similarly, keep nails trimmed short and do not wear nail polish.
- Do NOT use aprons to dry your hands.
- Do NOT smoke in food preparation areas.

Use good cleaning and storage techniques to reduce the chance of food borne illnesses. The highest levels of contamination are found in areas that are damp, such as kitchen sponges, dishcloths, sink drains, and faucet handles.

- Maintain the general cleanliness of the kitchen by:
    - Disposing of food scraps properly and removing crumbs
    - Wiping counters clean with soap and water and sanitize with a disinfectant
    - Sweeping and wet mopping floors to remove food
    - Cleaning all surfaces, including counter tops, faucets, handles and knobs, refrigerator handles, stoves/ovens, other appliances, etc.
- Do not store garbage in the food preparation area. If possible, store garbage in a cold place to prevent bacteria growth and pest infestation.
- Inspect kitchen for signs of microbiological growth such as mould, slime, and fungi. Clean the affected area appropriately.
- Inspect the kitchen for any plumbing leaks. Notify your supervisor to get it repaired.
- Choose an effective cleaning agent or disinfectant for the job. Most cleaning can be done using water and soap. Some resources will recommend disinfecting with bleach. While bleach is an effective disinfectant, it must be used with care. To sanitize, clean with 5mL (1 tsp) of bleach in 750 mL (3 cups) of water in a labelled spray bottle.
- Make sure that cleaning equipment and materials are conveniently located close to where they are needed.
- Launder dishcloths, aprons and towels by using a washing machine.
- Clean the food storage area regularly where dry goods, pasta, rice, canned foods, and cereals are stored to prevent buildup of crumbs and other pieces of food.

What are ways to keep foods separated?

To reduce the chances of cross contamination, you should also:

- Always use separate cutting boards for raw meat. Cutting boards of either plastic or wood are acceptable. Plastic can be cleaned in a dishwasher. Both types should be disinfected regularly.
- Wipe raw meat, fish or poultry juices using paper towels and then throw out these paper towels. DO NOT REUSE wash cloths after wiping countertops, especially after cleaning up raw meat juice until the cloths have been appropriately laundered.
- DO NOT REUSE any container or bowl that has held raw foods, especially raw meat and poultry, until it has been thoroughly cleaned.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize cutting boards, utensils, and food probe thermometers before re-using.
- Wash the lids of canned foods before opening to keep dirt from getting into the contents. Clean the can opener after each use.
- Store food packages on plates so that their juices do not drip on work surfaces or other food. Place on lower shelves to prevent further contamination.
- Never put cooked food on a plate, cutting board, or a surface that was used for raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs without having the surfaces cleaned first.

What are tips for cooking food and to make sure your cooked food is safe?

To reduce bacteria growth:

- Thaw food by using the refrigerator, microwave, oven, or by placing sealed packages in cold running water. Never thaw food on the kitchen counter. The outer layers will warm before the inside thaws. Bacteria will grow in these conditions.
- Cook meats to the recommended temperature. Use a clean food probe thermometer.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in running water before preparing, cooking, or eating. It is not necessary to use soap or specialty produce cleaners.
- Serve hot food while hot, or put it in the fridge or freezer as soon as possible once cooled (within two hours of preparation).
- Never leave food out for more than two hours, including cut fruits and vegetables.
- Use clean dishes and utensils to serve food. Never use the same ones you used when preparing raw food.
- Keep food on ice or serve it on platters from the refrigerator.
- Divide hot party food into smaller serving platters. Keep platters refrigerated until it’s time to warm them up for serving.

What are ways to chill and store food?

Always:

- Keep cooked food warmer than 60°C (140°F) or at 4°C (40°F) or cooler.
- Keep the refrigerator set at 4°C (40°F). If you are unsure of its temperature, use a thermometer and adjust the temperature control as required.
- Keep frozen food at -18°C (0°F) or less. This temperature stops bacterial growth, although it may not kill all bacteria already present before freezing.

Other food storage tips include:

- Put groceries that require refrigeration or freezing in the refrigerator or freezer away as soon as possible after they are purchased.
- Consider using insulated bags during warmer months when transporting food.
- Clean the refrigerator and freezer regularly to remove spoiled foods that may transfer bacteria or molds to other food.
- Do not keep foods too long. Use a dating system to make sure foods are used before their expiry date.
- Do not overstock the refrigerator. Allow the air to circulate freely, which will help keep food cool more effectively.
- Pack lunches in insulated carriers with a cold pack. Do not store the lunch container in direct sun or on a warm radiator.
- If using a cooler (for example, at a picnic), keep the cooler cold by using ice or ice packs. Keep the cooler out of direct sunlight. Open the cooler as little as possible. It may be helpful to use a separate cooler for drinks if you will open the cooler for drinks more often.

What are tips to help prevent pest infestations?

- Refuse shipments in which you find pests, such as cockroaches (their egg

cases) or mice.
- Remove garbage regularly and properly.
- Keep garbage tightly covered so it does not attract pests.
- Store recyclables as far from your building as local by-laws allow.
- Store all food and supplies away from walls and floors.
- Maintain food storage areas at 50 percent or less humidity. Low humidity helps keep cockroach eggs from hatching.
- Refrigerate foods, such as cocoa, powdered milk, and nuts, that attract insects.
- Keep the equipment used for cleaning dry.
- Clean and sanitize your work area thoroughly after each use.

Are there laws or regulations that apply to when preparing food for the public?

Yes. Wherever food is manufactured, processed, stored, handled, displayed, distributed, sold, or offered for sale, it is important to check with both your local jurisdiction (province or territory) and municipality to find out what laws apply. These rules apply to catering and temporary food events as well. Food safety is enforced by public health inspectors. In some areas, persons handling food may also need a food handling certificate.

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