



Food Handlers Guide

Provided by:



Food Handlers Guide

Best Practices

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Introduction

The food you serve the children in your care should be safe to eat. All food must be stored and prepared in a manner to prevent food-borne illness and to reduce the risk of food allergies. Make food safety a top priority in your centre.

You and your staff must practice good hygiene when preparing and serving food. As well, food must be stored correctly and cooked properly. Ensure that all staff is trained in proper food handling practices. Contact your district Public Health Inspector for information on food handler certification programs that will benefit the center and staff.

All material in this booklet has been sourced from the York Region Food Safety Resources website.

Micro-organisms & Allergens

There are a few organisms that can cause disease and illness through food. Bacteria, viruses, parasites, yeast, mould and fungi are a few of them. Not all micro-organisms cause disease and illness, the ones that do are called Pathogens.

There are five factors that affect the growth of micro-organisms in food:

- Type of food – e.g. meat, dairy, poultry
- Time
- Temperature
- pH – acidic, alkaline
- Moisture

Food allergens are substances that trigger an allergic action. Not all allergens are destroyed by cooking processes. A **food allergy** occurs when the body's immune system over-reacts to a certain food or additive that can cause an allergic reaction.

Allergens that commonly cause reactions are:

- Nuts – **Peanuts**, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts
- Sesame seeds
- Milk and dairy products
- Eggs
- Fish and shellfish

Emergency procedures for an allergic reaction should be posted in the food premises.

For a suspected allergic reaction:

- Call 911.
- Make sure to inform the emergency operator that you suspect the victim is having an allergic.
- Provide the exact location and telephone number of your center.

Ensure all staff are familiar with these procedures

Safe Food Storage

The following term is beneficial in understanding food storage,

Danger Zone: *The temperature zone where bacteria multiply is called the danger zone. This temperature range is between 4°C and 60°C (40°F and 140°F). If food items are kept within this temperature range, bacteria will multiply by doubling every 20 minutes. Therefore, it is important to keep food hot or cold and out of the danger zone to stop bacteria from growing. (Refer to danger zone chart)*

It is important to protect the food from contamination and to make sure that micro-organisms in the raw food do not grow. To ensure proper food storage, follow these steps:

- Check the temperature of hazardous foods upon delivery. These foods should be stored away immediately in dry storage rooms or refrigerators.

(Refer to Storing Food Safely chart)

- To maintain food at a safe temperature (4°C/140°F), leave space around the food items to allow air to circulate.
- Do not mix old or leftover products with new stock, use up all old food items first.
- Wash and sanitize the containers that the containers before replacing with fresh new food.
- Use the 'first in, first out' rule for proper food rotation. Date your items so you know which food items are the oldest and should be used first.
- Check all the 'best before' and 'expiry dates'. If the food is expired, **DO NOT USE THE PRODUCT.**

Personal Hygiene

During food preparation a food handler can contaminate food products. The main areas of the body that contain micro-organisms are the head (nose and throat), hands (cuts, burns, open sores, skin disease and dirty finger nails), lungs (respiratory illnesses, coughing), rectum (fecal matter).

How to prevent contamination from the body

- Head and Lung Areas:
 - Confine the hair (facial hair too) to prevent it from falling into the food.
 - Avoid coughing or sneezing onto food, equipment, utensils and food contact surfaces. If you do, the food must be thrown out and the surfaces washed and sanitized. Make sure to sneeze into a tissue and remember to wash your hands.
 - Report all respiratory illnesses to the supervisor.
- The Rectum Area
 - If you have diarrhea, nausea or vomiting, report symptoms to your supervisor immediately. **Do not handle food when you have these symptoms.**
 - Wash your hands after using the toilet.
 - Wash every time even though you have recovered from an illness and are healthy, there may still be pathogens in your fecal matter which can make people sick.
- Hands
 - Hand washing is the most important step to prevent contamination of food.

- If you have any cuts, burns, open sores or skin diseases on your hands, report it to your supervisor immediately. You will be required to wear gloves at all times when handling food.
- Avoid touching food with your bare hands.
- Use proper utensils to prepare food such as tongs.
- Keep fingernails short and use a nail brush to remove any micro-organisms under the nails. Do not share nailbrushes.
- Do not wear artificial nails or nail polish.
- Do not wear jewellery on your hands and wrists, because it can trap dirt and pathogens. A part of the jewellery can fall off and get lost in the food.
- Never wipe your hands on a cloth or the front of your clothes. This will pass the germs back onto your hands. Always wipe hands on disposable paper towels or use a hand dryer.

Hand Washing

Micro-organisms that cause food borne illnesses move from place to place by human hands, and can be prevented by hand washing.

The steps to hand washing are:

1. Wet hands with warm water
2. Apply liquid soap
3. Rub hands together and lather for 15 seconds
4. Rinse with warm water
5. Dry hands with paper towels or hand dryer
6. Turn off taps with paper towel

(Refer to *Correct Hand washing Procedures* chart)

When to wash your hands:

- Before starting your shift.
- After using the toilet.
- After sneezing or coughing into your hands.
- After touching chemicals.
- After touching raw products such as meats and vegetables and when hands are contaminated.
- After touching contaminated surfaces such as dirty cutting boards, dirty dishes, bags of garbage or garbage containers, mop handles etc.
- After handling money.
- Before and after smoking, taking a break or eating.
- Before preparing and serving food
- As needed throughout the day

Waterless Hand Gel Antiseptics

In center where hand washing facilities are readily available, hand washing should be the first choice. Waterless hand get antiseptics are meant to compliment hand washing, NOT as a replacement. The gel antiseptics are not effective if your hands are soiled and dirty.

Glove Use for the Food Handler

Proper hand washing coupled with the proper use of utensils is the preferred method of handling food. However, if you have cuts burns, open sores, skin diseases on your hands, when worn appropriately, gloves can act as an effective barrier for disease and bacteria transmission.

- If you wear gloves they must be changed frequently and between tasks. Protect the food by wearing disposable, water-tight gloves.
- Use vinyl, nitrile, neoprene or polyethylene gloves. Do not wear latex gloves. Latex gloves can cause severe allergic reactions and are not recommended for use in child care settings
- Do not use gloves in place of using utensils.

Cross-Contamination

Cross contamination can occur when pathogens or allergens are passed from one food to another.

To prevent cross-contamination you should:

- Wash hands.
- Store raw food below ready-to-eat products in the refrigerator.
- Use separate utensils and cutting boards for raw and cooked food as well as for items that may cause allergic reactions.
- All cutting boards must have a surface that is smooth and free of cracks and pits for easy cleaning.
- Clean and sanitize food contact surfaces, utensils and equipment before each use.
- Sanitize the probe thermometer before and after inserting into food.
- Use proper 'tasting' methods
- Transfer the food to a bowl and use a separate utensil to taste the food.
- Never double-dip your tasting utensil, if you taste directly from the food.

Cleaning refers to removal of dirt, oil and grease with soap and water.

Sanitizing refers to reducing the number of micro-organisms to a safe level.

The following are the different types of approved sanitizers:

1. Hot water at a minimum of 77°C (170°F) for a minimum of 45 seconds
2. Chemical sanitizers – for a minimum of 45 seconds
 - (a) Chlorine and a minimum of 100 ppm. Mix 2 ml (approximately ½ teaspoon) of household bleach with a 1 litre (4 cups) of warm water
 - (b) Iodine at a minimum of 25 ppm

Sanitizing solutions must be prepared daily, changed frequently and stored with proper labels.

Manual washing

Utensils can transfer pathogens from person to person if they are not properly washed and sanitized after each use. Therefore, utensils must be cleaned and sanitized using manual or mechanical dishwashing procedures. Change sanitizing solution frequently to maintain minimum temperatures and concentrations. As utensils are being washed the temperature of the water will decrease and the sanitizer will be used up.

Dishwashing

- 3 sink method

Always use a three compartment sink for cleaning and sanitizing multi-use utensils and dishes (e.g. plates, knives, forks) the method follows these steps

1st sink: Wash with clean detergent solution

2nd sink: Rinse in clean water not lower than 43°C (110°F)

3rd sink: Sanitize for at least 45 seconds with the above mentioned sanitizers

(Refer to Dishwashing 3 sink method chart)

- 2 sink method

The 2 sink method is used for cleaning and sanitizing pots, pans and utensils that are not used directly by the consumers

1st sink: Wash with a clean detergent solution, then rinse with clean water not lower than 43°C (110°F)

2nd sink: Sanitize for at least 45 seconds with the above mentioned sanitizers

(Refer to Dishwashing 2 sink method chart)

Food Contact Surfaces

Food contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized after each use (e.g. work table, butcher block, etc.)

- Scrape the surface and wash with warm soapy water to dissolve grease, etc.
- Rinse with clean water to remove the soap film and debris
- Sanitize using one of the three approved chemical sanitizing solutions as previously discussed at double the strength (e.g., minimum of 200 ppm for chlorine). Mix 5 ml (approximately 1 teaspoon) of household bleach (5.25% chlorine) with 1 litre (4 cups) of water at 24°C (75°F)
- Air dry

Wiping Cloths

Wiping cloths are used to sanitize surfaces on a routine basis.

- The solution must be changed regularly throughout the day.
- Sanitize using one of the approved chemical sanitizing solutions as previously discussed at double the strength (e.g. minimum of 200 ppm for chlorine). Mix 5 ml (1 teaspoon) of household bleach (95.25% chlorine) with 1 litre (4 cups) of water at 24° C (75° F).
- If the sanitizer is in a spray bottle make sure it is labelled. A single-use cloth/paper towel is acceptable for use.
- Wiping cloths must be clean and in good condition.

Blood Spills

In the event of a blood spill (e.g. food handler accidentally cuts their hand during food preparation), the following steps should be taken:

- Treat all blood spills as infectious.
- Disposable gloves must be worn when cleaning blood spills.
- Disinfect the area with a chlorine solution at a minimum of 5000 ppm. Mix 62 ml (1/4 cup) of household bleach with 562 ml (2 ¼ cups) of water or 1 part of chlorine with 9 parts of water.
- Wipe up contaminated areas using paper towels and discard the soiled paper towels in a plastic bag.
- Repeat step 3 and let stand for a contact time of 10 minutes. Wipe up contaminated areas using paper towels and discard the soiled paper towels in a plastic bag.
- Remove disposable gloves and discard in a plastic bag.
- Wash your hands.

Sanitary Maintenance of the Food Premises

It is a requirement to maintain the food premises in a clean and sanitary manner at all times. The following areas must be routinely cleaned:

1. Floors, ceilings and walls
 - Use a damp mop to clean daily.
2. Equipment and work surfaces
 - All surfaces that come in contact with food should be sanitized daily.
 - Do not use chipped and cracked dishes and utensils.
3. Sanitary facilities
 - Washbasins, urinals and toilets must be cleaned and sanitized daily and as often as necessary to maintain them in a sanitary condition.
4. Garbage
 - Collect and store garbage in insect and vermin-proof containers.
 - Remove garbage frequently to maintain sanitary conditions

Pest Control

The following points will assist you in maintaining a pest free premise:

- Provide screened and tight fitting doors and windows to prevent insects and rodents from entering.
- Inspect all deliveries for signs of infestation.
- Implement a cleaning schedule to eliminate food debris in a food premise e.g. clean under the fridge, stove and dry storage areas.
- All holes in pipes, walls, ceilings and floors should be properly sealed.
- All outside doors should have a seal along the bottom to prevent pests and dust from entering.
- Rotate food stock regularly to prevent insect infestations in old grain products
- Store food products in insect and rodent-proof containers. This includes food used in classrooms for sensory play
- Consult with a pest control company if the pest problem persists or you need any assistance.

Time/Temperature Abuse

Time/temperature abuse refers to keeping hazardous foods in the Danger Zone (refer to *Danger Zone* chart) for an unsafe period of time. This is the most common cause of food-borne illness.

(Refer to Minimum temperatures for cooking and reheating of hazardous food chart)

Taking Temperatures

When taking temperatures follow these steps:

- Always use an accurate thermometer to check the temperature of the food.
- Clean and sanitize the probe of the thermometer before you take the temperature of the food.
- Put the thermometer in the thickest part of the food. Do not put the end of the thermometer near the bone.
- Do not take just one reading, test several areas of the food item.

Hot holding

Often food is cooked prior to serving. After the food is cooked it must be kept hot and out of the Danger Zone. The internal temperature of the cooked food must remain at 60° C (140° F) or higher.

Remember:

- Immediately following cooking, place the food items in the hot holding units.
- Use proper hot holding equipment (e.g. table top steam warmer).
- Always cover food with food grade material.
- Hot liquids such as gravy should be stirred often to ensure an even temperature throughout the product.

Reheating

Food must be reheated quickly to minimize the amount of time in the Danger Zone in order to prevent bacterial growth and possible toxin production. All food should be reheated within 2 hours. If a microwave is used to reheat food, stir the food to ensure an even temperature throughout.

Remember:

- Use proper cooking equipment to reheat the food quickly and thoroughly.

Food Service Tips

Many disease causing micro-organisms can be spread through food. The following tips will help ensure that the food served at your centre is safe and will not cause food-borne illness.

- Children and staff must wash their hands before eating. If the meal is interrupted (e.g., helping a child in the bathroom or wiping a runny nose), wash hands again before eating.
- Refer to the section on *proper hand washing*.
- Ensure that no one with symptoms of illness is responsible for food preparation.
- Food handlers must properly wash their hands at the hand wash basin in the food preparation area before handling any food.
- All food handlers must wear an appropriate hair restraint (e.g., hair net).
- The food preparation must take place in the designated food preparation area (e.g., kitchen) and not in the classroom.
- The food preparation area must be separated by a door or gate from areas where the children play.
- Do not serve unpasteurized milk or unpasteurized milk products.
- Do not serve ungraded, cracked or grade C eggs.
- Ensure that all raw fruits and vegetables are thoroughly washed before serving to children.
- Ensure that children do not share their food, utensils, cups or drinking bottles. This will help to reduce the risk of spreading germs from person to person.
- Ensure that all refrigeration units are equipped with accurate indicating thermometers.
- Ensure that all infant bottles are kept refrigerated and are properly labeled with the child's name.
- Ensure that food products do not come into direct contact with the lunch table. Protect food products by serving them on a disposable sanitary article (e.g., paper plate), or on a plate that can be properly cleaned and sanitized.
- Do not touch the working end of cutlery; only use the handle to pick it up.
- Handle clean cups, bowls and glasses so fingers and thumbs do not touch the inside or the lip.
- Food items served to children at the centre must be from an approved source. An approved source is a food premise that is inspected by the appropriate federal, provincial or municipal inspection agency (e.g., supermarkets or bakeries are approved sources). Food that is made in the home of a parent or staff member is not from an approved source, unless the home is inspected by the local health department, and these foods should not to be served to the children. An exception is made for food provided by a parent for his or her own child.

- Records must be maintained for all food products that are purchased and/or brought in from an approved source. Ensure you record who brought in the food, to whom the food was served, the date when the food was brought in and where the food was purchased. These records are necessary to aid in an investigation, should a food-borne illness occur.
- It is strongly recommended that persons responsible for food preparation have training in safe food handling. Contact your public health inspector for additional information on the program.

Food safety for allergy prevention

- An allergy risk list with the child's name and allergy-producing food items needs to be:
 - Dated
 - Current
 - Available to all staff for routine review
- When in doubt about a food's ingredients, do not serve it to a child with allergies.
- Do not reuse a dish that has not been properly cleaned and sanitized. Traces of the food, such as tomato, corn or egg, may be left behind and could seriously harm a child who is allergic to them.
- When serving a substitute food to a child with an allergy, use different utensils than those used to serve the regular food. Thoroughly clean and sanitize utensils after each use.
- Ensure that children do not share their food with each other.
- If a child is sick after eating, detailed information describing what they ate and drank and the symptoms, such as vomiting, diarrhea, skin rash, or a respiratory problem can help determine if they have had an allergic reaction.
- Do not use latex gloves in the child care centre, due to potential allergic reactions.