



**DD's Compassionate  
Support Pty Ltd.**

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## **Practice Guidelines — Food Preparation**

### **Definition**

Food hygiene refers to the conditions and measures necessary to ensure the safety of food from production to consumption. Food hygiene measures are intended to prevent the hazards caused by cross-contamination, biological contamination and allergens.

### **Cross-contamination**

The process by which bacteria or other microorganisms are unintentionally transferred from one substance or object to another, with harmful effects. Cross-contamination between raw and cooked food is the cause of most infection.

### **Biological hazards**

Microbial hazards in food include bacteria such as salmonella, viruses such as Norovirus, and parasites such as trematodes (flukes) as well as prions (e.g. mad cow disease).

Diarrhoeal diseases are the most common illnesses resulting from the consumption of contaminated food, causing 550 million people to fall ill and 230,000 deaths globally every year (WHO).

### **Allergens**

A food allergy is when the immune system reacts to a food substance (allergen), resulting in the production of allergy antibodies (proteins in the immune system) that identify and react with foreign substances.

An allergic reaction happens when a person develops symptoms following exposure to an allergen. Symptoms may include hives, swelling of the lips, eyes or face, vomiting or a wheeze.

The most common triggers are egg, cow's milk, peanut, tree nuts, sesame, soy, fish, shellfish, and wheat. Some food allergies can be severe, causing life-threatening reactions known as anaphylaxis. About two per cent of adults have food allergies.

## **Principles**

The key elements of food hygiene are:

- **Personal hygiene:** This includes handwashing, protective clothing, illness procedures, and other duties (e.g. avoiding smoking).
- **Preventing cross-contamination:** This includes preventing bacterial, physical, chemical, and allergenic contamination, particularly by having appropriate equipment in place (such as separate cutting boards).
- **Cleaning procedures:** Thorough cleaning of the kitchen, equipment, and kitchenware (including plates and cutlery) is vital.
- **Allergen control:** All providers must clearly explain which foods contain products that are allergenic and must prevent allergens from cross-contaminating other food.
- **Safe storage of food:** This includes storage locations and containers, using a first in first out system, appropriate labelling and temperature control.
- **Cooking temperatures:** Providers must ensure they cook and hold food at appropriate temperatures to prevent bacterial risks.

## **Mealtime Management Plan**

If applicable, refer to the client's Mealtime Management Plan for individualised instructions on food preparation and provision.

## **People with food allergies**

Check the client's Support Plan for any known food allergies. Check again with the client and their family. Foods that may cause an allergic reaction are called allergens. Even a tiny amount of an allergen can cause a reaction.

If the client lives alone, it is possible to eliminate all food allergens from the home. This can be achieved through careful reading of labels on packaging and taking necessary precautions during cooking.

If the client does not choose to eliminate all food allergens from the home, or you are preparing food in an environment away from the home (where there is a potential for allergens to come into contact with the client's food) the following steps should be taken:

- Read all labels on cans, jars and packaging.
- Label foods as "safe" or "not safe" (perhaps using red/green stickers).
- Designate particular shelves for 'safe' foods rather than putting similar foods next to each other.
- Avoid contamination by:
  - washing hands
  - not allowing allergen-covered utensils to touch 'safe' foods
  - confine all eating to limited areas, e.g. kitchen or dining areas
  - use different utensils to prepare non-allergenic and allergenic dishes
  - wash foods or place in sink/dishwasher immediately after use
  - clean grills, use foil to protect surface when cooking
  - clean all surfaces after preparing food
  - clean countertops before preparing food.

### **General food preparation**

- Minimise the cumulative time that potentially hazardous food is kept within the temperature danger zone (maximum of two hours).
- Clean, sanitise and dry all food contact surfaces, utensils, chopping boards and equipment after preparing food.
- Store raw and cooked food separately.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables to remove contamination.
- Use single-use or disposable cloths where possible.
- If multi-use cloths are used, they are to be cleaned and sanitised after each task.

### **Cleaning and sanitation**

- Clean all food preparation areas with an anti-bacterial solution and paper towel.
- Thoroughly wash glasses, cutlery, crockery and utensils with hot water and detergent.

### **Utensils**

- Saucepans, bowls, plates, etc. must be clean and sanitised.
- Utensils should be durable, washable, unchipped and uncracked.
- Use microwave-safe containers in microwaves.

## **Cutting boards**

- Allocate and label separate plastic boards for preparing cooked or raw foods.
- After use, scrape boards and wash in hot, soapy water; use a sanitiser.
- If using a wooden board, wash in hot soapy water, smear with salt and then wash again before using.

## **Food handling**

- Tongs, spoons and forks should be used for handling food, in preference to gloved hands
- Separate tongs should be used for serving raw foods and cooked foods.
- Use gloves to handle food if no tongs are available.
- Wash and dry hands thoroughly.
- Hair must be tied back, and a hairnet used.
- Stop clothes, jewellery or a phone touching food or surfaces (e.g. tie hair back, remove loose jewellery and rings, cover open sores).
- Wear clean clothing and aprons.
- Do not eat, spit, smoke, sneeze, blow or cough over food or surfaces that touch food
- Inform supervisor if sick or unwell, or food has been contaminated in any way.

## **Washing hands properly**

- Use the sink provided just for handwashing.
- Wet hands under warm, running water.
- Lather hands with soap.
- Thoroughly scrub fingers, palms, wrists, back of hands, and under nails for approximately 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands under warm, running water.
- Turn off taps using a paper towel or elbow.
- Thoroughly dry hands with a single-use towel.

## **When to wash hands**

- Before handling food, or if returning to handle food after completing other tasks.
- Before working with ready-to-eat food.
- After handling raw food.
- After using the toilet.
- After smoking, coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or tissue.
- After eating or drinking.

- After touching the face, hair, scalp, nose, etc.
- After doing anything else that could dirty their hands, e.g. handling garbage, touching animals or children or completing cleaning duties.

### **When to wear gloves**

- Wear neatly fitting disposable gloves at all times.
- Wear fresh gloves when alternating between handling raw foods and cooked foods.
- Discard gloves after each use.
- Wear gloves during cleaning up to protect hands from food contamination.

### **Freezing, defrosting and reheating food**

Frozen foods must be maintained below -17°C. To maintain the integrity of frozen food, the freezer requires:

- regular defrosting
- never to be overloaded
- cabinet doors to be shut when not in use
- regular checking of temperature.

Our workers observe the following rules:

- store delivered frozen foods immediately in the freezer
- rotate older goods to the top/front of the freezer
- expel air and reseal bulk frozen foods, review use by date and return promptly to the freezer if still within the use by date
- store frozen solid any potentially hazardous foods, never partially thaw.
- inspect potentially hazardous food daily to ensure it remains frozen
- wrap or cover food, store in food-grade containers which allow for proper air circulation
- keep the storage area in a clean condition
- check daily to ensure food is protected from contamination, stored in food-grade containers, and has free circulation of air.

### **Defrosting**

- Defrost all foods in a refrigerator at or below 5°, or rapidly defrost them in a microwave oven using the defrost setting.
- When using microwaves, thaw food at medium/low defrost.
- Use correct microwave procedures, such as:
  - alter the position of food pieces during thawing
  - ensure potentially hazardous food is properly thawed

- only use microwave approved materials
- cook all meat immediately after thawing.
- **Never refreeze** food after thawing or keep and reheat hot foods that are left from the day before.

## **Reheating**

- Reheat food immediately before use, where possible.
- Heat food from a refrigerator to above 60°C, as quickly as possible.
- Use a meat probe thermometer, if available, to check internal temperatures
- Slow cooking, as in a crockpot, can be dangerous and is not recommended
- Never reheat a precooked product more than once.
- Boil eggs for 10 minutes and then place in cold water for five minutes.

## **Food storage**

### **General storage requirements**

- Check packaging and labels are in good condition and "use by" dates are current.
- Check labels for special storage instructions.
- Unpack frozen or cool-type foods and place in the fridge immediately.
- Store food in a cool, dry area in food-grade containers with tight-fitting lids, and date-mark.
- Store chemicals in a separate area, so as not to contaminate food.
- Store food off the floor (e.g. at a minimum height of 15 centimetres) allowing for easy cleaning.

### **Dry goods storage**

Dry good storage areas must:

- be fly proof and vermin proof
- be adequately ventilated
- have properly fitting doors which seal completely
- have the lowest shelf at least 30 centimetres from the floor
- have containers made from food-grade materials with tight-fitting lids that are emptied and washed before refilling.

### **Refrigerated storage**

All foods that require refrigeration must be stored below 5°C. Cooked and uncooked foods must be kept separate to prevent cross-contamination:

- Store raw meats below cooked, where they cannot drip onto cooked foods.
- Store dairy products in their original packaging.
- Reseal opened cheeses or store in airtight containers.
- Recap and refrigerate after opening products sold in jars (e.g. mayonnaise, pickles, etc.)
- Store food according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use food within its date marking and on a stock rotation basis.
- Cover food products with plastic or store in food-grade containers.
- Keep the storage area clean.
- Use insulated thermal bags when grocery shopping with clients, and there is likely to be a delay in returning foods to a refrigerator.
- Clean and sanitise refrigerators weekly.

### **Transporting food and delivery of meals**

- No animals or chemicals are to be carried in the vehicle while food is being transported.
- Keep food transport containers/eskies in a clean and sanitary condition.
- Keep food transport vehicles in clean condition.
- Keep all meals under appropriate temperature control to prevent the growth of food poisoning bacteria and the production of toxins.
- Deliver food or meals within a minimal time period.
- Do not deliver food or meals damaged during transportation.
- Store any meals or food damaged during transportation separately from undamaged food or meals in the transport vehicle.
- Deliver food or meals directly to the client and do not leave unattended.
- Return or discard all left-over meals and never leave in eskies at the client's home.

### **Pest control**

Report to supervisor any evidence of the need for:

- pest control
- fly screens
- airtight garbage bins.

### **Smoking**

Smoking is not permitted in any food handling area or the client's home while workers are present.