



Lincoln-Lancaster County
Health Department

FOOD SAFETY IN CHILD CARE

A foodborne illness occurs when a person becomes sick from eating contaminated food or drink. There are more than 250 different types of foodborne diseases with different symptoms and causes. A wide variety of sources (viruses, bacteria, contaminants, parasites, and mold) can contaminate food and most of them cannot be seen, smelled or tasted.

While everyone is susceptible to a foodborne illness, young children and pregnant women are at a higher risk. The risk of foodborne illness can be greatly reduced by following guidelines for hand washing, excluding ill food service workers, and following best practices when storing, handling, preparing and cooking food and beverages.

FOOD HANDLER TRAINING REQUIREMENT (L.M.C. 8.14.035)

Any person responsible for receiving or holding Time/Temperature Control for Safety Food, or any person preparing food shall hold a Prep/Cook, Restricted/Shift Manager Food Handler, or Food Protection Manager Permit issued per [Lincoln Municipal Code Chapter 8.20](#), the Lincoln Food Code.

HAND HYGIENE

Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet, changing diapers and before and after preparing food. **Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable disease.** Gloves and/or hand sanitizers are NOT a substitute for proper hand washing when preparing or serving food.

In addition, no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat food is allowed when serving a highly susceptible population, per the Nebraska Food Code. Use gloves, tissues, tongs or other utensils to create a barrier between your hands and the food item.

EXCLUSION

People with the following should not prepare or serve food:

- vomiting and/or diarrhea or until 72 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea.
- skin lesions on exposed areas (face, hands, fingers) that cannot be covered. Wear disposable gloves over covered sores on the fingers or hands.

FOOD STORAGE, PREPARATION, SERVING AND COOKING GUIDELINES

STORAGE:

- **Store all Time-Temperature Control for Safety Foods ([TCS foods](#))** (i.e. eggs, milk or milk products, meat, poultry, fish) **at 41° F or below.** *Childcare centers that receive hot food entrees must hold TCS foods at 135° F and above and check food temperature with a clean, calibrated food thermometer before serving.* Bacteria may grow or produce toxins if food is kept at temperatures that are not hot or cold enough. These bacteria can cause illness if the food is eaten. Store lunches that contain [TCS foods](#) in the refrigerator. Use coolers with ice packs for keeping lunches cold on field trips.
- **Store raw meat, poultry, and eggs products on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.** This will prevent meat and poultry juices from dripping onto other foods.
- **All [TCS foods](#) such as leftover portions, must be refrigerated, covered and date labeled.**

PREPARATION:

- **Food must be prepared in the kitchen on a food prep surface. Preferably, one sink should be dedicated for food preparation and one for hand washing.** This area has

equipment, surfaces, and utensils that are durable, easily cleaned, and safe for food preparation.

- **Rinse fresh produce under running water in a clean, sanitized sink before preparing.** This helps remove pesticides or trace amounts of soil and stool, which might contain bacteria or viruses.
- **Clean and sanitize all surfaces before beginning food preparation.** Unclean surfaces can harbor bacteria and contribute to cross contamination. Cross contamination occurs when a contaminated product or its juices contacts other products and contaminates them. Cleaning removes debris on surfaces, and allows the sanitizer to work properly.
- **Use an approved sanitizer for food contact surfaces. Chemical test strips should be used to check the concentration.** Too high of a concentration of sanitizer can leave chemicals on the food contact surface, which can contaminate food and make people sick.
- **Label all sanitizer spray bottles (all chemicals must be labeled).**
- **Always wash hands between different foods** (raw meats and produce). Items such as cutting boards, utensils, and dishes must be washed and sanitized between use on raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- **Use separate cutting boards for raw meats and produce.** Cross contamination occurs when a contaminated product or its juices, (e.g. raw meat or poultry) touches other products (e.g. fresh fruit, vegetables, cooked foods) and contaminates them.
- **Thaw [TCS foods](#) properly:** 1) on a tray on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator, or 2) in the microwave immediately before cooking. **DO NOT leave food out on the kitchen counter to thaw.** Thawing food on a kitchen counter can allow bacteria to grow in the food.
- **DO NOT prepare infant formula in the hand washing sink in the infant room.** Use water from the kitchen prep sink to mix infant formula or use bottled water.
- **DO NOT serve unpasteurized milk, cheese, or apple juice.** These items may be the source of foodborne illnesses caused by pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli* O157:H7, and *Listeria*.

COOKING/COOLING:

- **Quickly heat [TCS foods](#).** Take food temperatures to make sure the food has reached the correct temperature. Keep temperature logs for food [prepared onsite](#) and for [catered food](#).
- **Cook raw hamburger thoroughly until juices run clear. Use a food thermometer to achieve an internal temperature of 160° F.** Raw or partially cooked ground beef can be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. Large quantities of hamburger may “look” cooked, but may contain “pockets” of partially cooked meat. COLOR IS NOT a good indicator of doneness—always use an accurate stem probe thermometer!
- **Once cooked, take food temperatures periodically to make sure food remains at the recommended temperature.** Monitoring temperatures can ensure that all [TCS foods](#) have not been in the “danger zone” (41° - 135° F) too long, which allows for bacterial growth. See Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/> Appendix U (Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Cooking Temperatures).
- **DO NOT put cooked food in the same container or on the same unwashed platter, or cutting board that was used for uncooked meat or poultry.** The container or platter could contain harmful bacteria that could contaminate the cooked food.
- **When preparing food to serve later, cook to proper temperature and cool quickly.** Cool hot foods from 135°F to 70° F within two hours and to 41°F within four hours of reaching 70°F. The faster foods are cooled, the better. Cool foods in shallow containers (2” or less deep) or by placing the container of food in an ice water bath.