Food Safety Guidelines
Basic Food Safety

A foodborne illness is a disease that is transmitted to people through food. Many hazards can make food unsafe and cause a foodborne illness. Some come from the environment and others happen when people don't handle food the right way.

How food becomes unsafe

**Biological Hazards:** These are tiny forms of life that you can't see, taste or smell.
- Bacteria
- Viruses
- Parasites
- Fungi

**Chemical Hazards:** Chemicals in your operation can contaminate food.
- Cleaners
- Sanitizers
- Polishes
- Machine lubricants

**Physical Hazards:** Objects can get into food, including naturally occurring ones like bones.
- Glass
- Bones
- Fruit pits
- Metal shavings
- Staples
- Dirt
- Bandages
- Jewelry

Your role in keeping food safe

1. Practice good personal hygiene - Don't transfer pathogens from your body to food.
2. Control the time and temperature of food - Don't let food sit for too long at temperatures that are good for pathogen growth.
3. Prevent cross contamination - Don't transfer pathogens from one surface to another or from one food to another.
4. Clean and sanitize surfaces the right way - Keep everything clean and sanitize anything that touches food.
Good personal hygiene is a critical protective measure against foodborne illness. Actions you should always avoid while working with and around food:

- Scratching the scalp
- Running fingers through the hair
- Wiping or touching the nose
- Rubbing an ear
- Touching a pimple or open sore
- Wearing dirty clothing
- Coughing or sneezing into the hand
- Spitting in the establishment

How and when to wash your hands

Handwashing is the most critical aspect of personal hygiene. While it may appear obvious, many food handlers fail to wash their hands properly and as often as needed. Food handlers must wash their hands before they start work and after:

- Using the restroom
- Handling raw meat, poultry and fish
- Touching the hair, face, or body
- Sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
- Smoking, eating, drinking, or chewing gum
- Handling chemicals that might affect the safety of food
- Taking out the garbage
- Clearing tables
- Touching clothing
- Touching anything else that may contaminate hands, such as work surfaces or washcloths

Hand washing steps:

1. Wet hands
2. Soap for 20 seconds
3. Wash for 20 seconds
4. Rinse
5. Towel dry
6. Turn off tap with towel

Gloves must never be used in place of handwashing. Hands must be washed before putting gloves on and when changing to a new pair. Gloves should be removed by grasping them at the cuff and peeling them off inside out over the fingers while avoiding contact with the palm and fingers.

Food handlers should change their gloves:

- As soon as they become soiled or torn
- Before beginning different task
- At least every four hours during continual use
- After handling raw meat and before handling cooked or ready to eat food

What to Wear

A food handler’s attire plays an important role in the prevention of foodborne illness. Dirty clothes may harbor pathogens.

Food handlers should:

- Wear a clean hat or other hair restraint
- Wear clean clothing daily
- Remove aprons when leaving food-preparation areas
- Remove jewelry from hands and arms prior to preparing or serving food
- Wear appropriate shoes (closed toe with a non-skid sole)
Controlling Time and Temperature

Any type of food can be contaminated. But some types allow more pathogen growth than others. The best way to control pathogen growth is to control time and temperature. So these food items are known as foods that need time and temperature control for safety or TCS food for short.

The most common types of TCS food:
- Milk and dairy products
- Poultry
- Meat; beef, pork and lamb
- Shellfish and crustaceans
- Fish
- Heat-treated plant food such as cooked rice, beans and vegetables
- Baked potatoes
- Tofu or soy protein
- Sliced melons
- Sprouts and sprout seeds
- Cut tomatoes
- Eggs
- Cut leafy greens

How to measure temperature of food

To control the temperature of food, you must first know how to check it. A thermometer is the most important tool for doing this. Follow the guidelines below to do it right.

1. Use the right thermometer for the job you are doing.
2. Make sure the thermometer is ready to be used. It must be washed, rinsed and sanitized before each use.
3. Check temperatures the right way.
   - Stick the thermometer into the thickest part of the food.
   - Wait until the thermometer reading stays steady before writing down a temperature.
   - Take another reading in a different spot.
4. Clean and sanitize the thermometer.

Holding and storing TCS food

Temperature Danger Zone: To keep TCS food safe, you must keep it out of the temperature danger zone.
- Pathogens grow well in the temperature range of 41° F to 135° F. This range is called the temperature danger zone.

Holding TCS Food Safely: To keep TCS food safe during holding, follow these guidelines.
- Keep hot food at 135° F or higher.
- Keep cold food at 41° F or lower.
- Keep frozen food frozen.
- Check the food’s temperature at least every four hours.
- If food is not being held at the right temperature, dispose of immediately.

Storing TCS Food Safely: TCS food must be stored the right way.
- DO NOT overload coolers and freezers.
- Return prepped food to coolers as quickly as possible.
- Plan ahead so you don’t have to open cooler doors more than necessary.
Safe ways to thaw, cook, cool, and reheat TCS food

Time-temperature abuse can happen easily during these steps if you are not careful. You can prevent this by make good food-prep choices. Here's how.

**Thawing TCS Food:** Never thaw TCS food at room temperature. There are only four acceptable ways to thaw TCS food.

- In a cooler at 41° F or lower.
- Submerged under running water at 70° F or lower.
- In a microwave oven if the food is cooked immediately.
- As a part of the cooking process.

**Prepping TCS Food:** TCS food can become unsafe if it is allowed to sit too long in the temperature danger zone.

- Never prep TCS food in large batches.
- Small batches keep ingredients from sitting out for long periods of time.

**Cooking TCS Food:** Cooking food will reduce pathogens in it to safe levels. The food must reach the right internal temperature and stay there for a specific amount of time.

- Poultry: 165° F for 15 seconds
- Ground Meat: 155° F for 15 seconds
- Fish: 145° F for 15 seconds
- Pork and beef (steaks and chops): 145° F for 15 seconds

**Cooling TCS Food:** TCS food must be cooled following the steps below.

**Cooling Process:**
- First cool from 73°F to 70°F within two hours
- Then cool it to 47°F or lower in the next four hours

**Cooling Methods:**
- There are many ways to cool food quickly and safely.
- Never cool food at room temperature.
- Never cool large amounts of hot food in a cooler.

**Reheating TCS Food:** If you are reheating TCS food you must heat it to the right temperature.

- Heat it to an internal temperature of 76°F for 75 seconds.
- The food must reach this temperature within two hours.
- Never use hot holding equipment to reheat food unless it has been made to do this.
Preventing Cross-Contamination

As you learned earlier, pathogens can be transferred from one surface or food to another. This is called cross-contamination. If you don’t prevent cross-contamination, a foodborne illness can happen. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to prevent it.

Preventing Cross-Contamination When Storing Food

Here’s how to store food to prevent cross-contamination:

- Wrap or cover food before storing it.
- Store food only in containers intended for food.
- Store ready-to-eat food above raw seafood, meat and poultry.
- Store food only in designated food-storage areas.
- Store food and non-food items away from walls and at least six inches off the floor.

Preventing Cross-Contamination When Serving Food

Surfaces that touch food are called food-contact surfaces. Many of the utensils and equipment you use have food-contact surfaces. Plates, glasses, forks and tongs are examples. You can contaminate these surfaces if you are not careful when handling them. Follow the practices below to prevent this.

- Do NOT touch the parts of dishes or glassware that come in contact with food.
- Do NOT stack glasses when carrying them.
- Do NOT hold utensils by the parts that come in contact with food.
- Do NOT use care hands to handle ready-to-eat food.
- Never scoop ice with your bare hands or a glass.
- Never use towels for cleaning food spills for any other purpose.
- Never use the same utensils when handling different food items.

Preventing Cross-Contamination When Storing Utensils and Equipment

Utensils and equipment with food-contact surfaces, such as cutting boards, must be stored in ways that prevent contamination. The same is true for nonfood items such as napkins and plastic forks and knives. Here is what you should do.

- Store utensils and equipment that touches food at least six inches off the floor.
- Store glasses and cups upside down on a clean and sanitized surface.
- Store utensils with handles up.

What to Do if Cross-Contamination Happens

There are several things you should do if you notice cross-contamination has happened.

1. Do your best to fix the problem.
2. Set aside the contaminated item so no one can use it. Discard as soon as possible.
What to Do for People Who Have Food Allergies

Some people are allergic to certain types of food. The tiniest speck of a food they are allergic to can make them sick or even cause death. You must keep this food away from these people. Here’s how.

The Most Common Food Allergens

- Milk
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Eggs
- Wheat
- Soy
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts

How to Keep Customers with Food Allergies Safe

- Make sure the allergen does not touch anything for these customers including food, beverages, utensils, equipment, and gloves.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize cookware, utensils and equipment before prepping their food.
- Wash your hands and change gloves before prepping their food.
- Use equipment assigned for prepping their food.

What to Do if Contamination Happens

- DO NOT serve the food to the customer.
- Set it aside so it cannot be used.
Cleaning and Sanitizing

Cleaning removes food and other dirt from a surface. Sanitizing reduces pathogens on a surface to safe levels. The most important reason to clean and sanitize is to prevent the spread of pathogens to food. It also helps control pests like insects and rodents.

How and When to Clean and Sanitize

Surfaces to Clean and Sanitize
All surfaces must be cleaned and rinsed. Examples include:

- Walls
- Storage Shelves
- Garbage Containers

Any surface that touches food must be cleaned and sanitized. Examples include:

- Knives
- Stockpots
- Cutting Boards

If you notice worn or cracked equipment, set it aside and report it to your property manager. This equipment is not easy to clean or sanitize. It also may hold pathogens.

How to Clean and Sanitize

The procedure below shows you how to clean and sanitize. Always use cleaners and sanitizers according to manufacturer’s directions.

1. Clean the surface.
2. Rinse the surface.
3. Sanitize the surface.
4. Allow the surface to air dry.

When to Clean and Sanitize

All food-contact surfaces need to be cleaned and sanitized at these times.

- After you’re done using them.
- Before you start working with a different type of food.
- Any time you’re interrupted during and task and the surfaces could have been contaminated.
- After four hours if the items have been in constant use.

How to Handle Cleaning Tools and Supplies

Cleaning tools and supplies must be taken care of correctly. Here’s how.

Storing Chemicals and Cleaning Supplies
Chemicals and cleaning supplies must be stored in the right place to prevent food contamination.

- Always store chemicals and cleaning supplies in the designated storage area.
- Never store chemicals and cleaning supplies near food.
- Always dump mop water and other dirty liquids into a designated floor drain.
- Never dump dirty liquids into a toilet.
Handling Garbage
Garbage can contaminate food and equipment if it’s not handled safely. It can also create odors and attract pests. Here’s how you should handle it.

- Remove garbage from prep areas as quickly as possible.
- DO NOT clean garbage containers near prep or food storage areas.
- Clean the inside and outside of garbage containers often or if food is spilled into them.
- Close the lids on outdoor containers.

How to Keep Food Safe Through Dishwashing
Table ware and utensils are often cleaned and sanitized in a dishwashing machine. Larger items such as pots and pans are often cleaned by hand in a three-compartment sink. Whichever method you use, you must follow specific practices so items are cleaned and sanitized.

Setting Up a Three-Compartment Sink
Start by cleaning and sanitizing each sink and all work surfaces. Next, set up each sink following these steps.

- Sink 1: Fill with water at least 110° F. Add detergents.
- Sink 2: Fill with water. Leave the sink empty if you spray-rinse items.
- Sink 3: Fill with water. Add sanitizer. Check the strength of the sanitizer.

Using a Three-Compartment Sink
1. Rinse, scrape, or soak the items before washing them.
2. Clean the items in the first sink.
   - Use a brush, cloth or nylon scrub pad to loosen dirt.
   - Change the water when the suds are gone or the water is dirty.
3. Rinse the items in the second sink.
   - Dip them in the water or spray-rinse them.
   - Remove any food or detergent.
   - Change the water when it becomes dirty or full of suds.
4. Sanitize the items in the third sink.
   - Soak them in a sanitizer solution as directed.
   - Never rinse items after sanitizing them, this could contaminate the surfaces.
5. Air-dry the items.
   - Place them upside down so they will drain.
   - DO NOT wipe them dry.

Washing Items in a Dishwasher
- Scrape, rinse or soak items before washing.
- Presoak items with dried on food.
- Never overload the dish racks.
- Use the right rack for the items you are washing.
- Load racks so they water spray will reach all surfaces.
- As each rack comes out of the machine, check for dirty items.
- Rewash dirty items.
- Never use a towel to dry items.
- Air-dry all items.