

# *Food Safety*

## Background

The food safety display shows the need for washing hands and performing other sanitary measures before handling or eating food. The display contains table top posters and “glitbox” kit (UV light and magic potion).

## Significant Outcomes

**Clean:** Wash hands and surfaces often. According to food safety experts, bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get on to cutting boards, knives, sponges and counter tops.

- Wash hands in hot soapy water before preparing food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets. For best results, use warm water to moisten your hands; apply soap and rub your hands together for 20 seconds before rinsing thoroughly.
- Wash cutting boards, knives, utensils and counter tops in hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next one.
- Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Wash cutting boards in a dishwasher or in hot soapy water after use.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. Or, if using cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of the washing machine.

**Separate:** Do not cross-contaminate. Cross-contamination spreads bacteria from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Experts caution to keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other food in the grocery shopping cart.
- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so juices do not drip onto other foods.
- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat products and another for salads and other foods which are ready to eat.
- Always wash cutting boards, knives and other utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate which previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood.

**Cook:** Cook to proper temperatures. Food safety experts agree that foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food-borne illness.

- Use a meat thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat and poultry, to make sure that the meat is cooked all the way through.
- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145°F. Cook whole poultry to 180°F for doneness.

- Cook ground meat, where bacteria can spread during grinding, to at least 160°F. Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) links eating undercooked, pink ground beef with a higher risk of illness. If a thermometer is not available, do not eat ground beef that is still pink inside.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Do not use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.
- Cook fish until it is opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
- Make sure there are no cold spots in food (where bacteria can survive) when cooking in a microwave oven. For an even cooking, cover food, stir and rotate. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to 165°F.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. Food safety experts advise consumers to refrigerate foods quickly as cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Public health officials recommend setting the refrigerator at 40°F and the freezer unit at 0°F. Occasionally check these temperatures with an appliance thermometer.

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours.
- Never defrost (or marinate) food on the kitchen counter. Use the refrigerator, cold running water or the microwave.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- With poultry and other stuffed meats, remove the stuffing and refrigerate it in a separate container.
  - Do not pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.