



# FOOD HANDLING FOR CHILDCARE SETTINGS

In order to prevent foodborne illness caused by bacteria, viruses and parasites, it is very important that food be handled properly. Persons who have signs or symptoms of illness, including vomiting, diarrhea or infectious skin lesions which can not be covered, or who are infected with foodborne pathogens (e.g., *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, *E. coli* O157:H7) should not handle food. Whenever possible, staff who diaper children and have frequent exposure to feces should not prepare food for others. Careful handwashing needs to be practiced at all times, especially for caregivers who prepare food.

## **Preparing, Eating and Storing Food**

1. Wash hands well before and after touching food.
2. Wash utensils, platters, counter tops and cutting boards with hot soapy water before and after contact with raw meat or poultry products.
3. Staff who diaper children and have frequent exposure to feces should not prepare food for others.
4. Canned soup and poultry products should be eaten immediately after opening.
5. Fruits and vegetables should be rinsed well.
6. Wash meal service area before and after serving food with hot soapy water followed with a disinfectant solution. (Note: You can make your own disinfectant by mixing one tablespoon of bleach with one quart water prepared fresh daily.)
7. Wash children's hands before eating.
8. Use separate utensils for each child. If interrupted while feeding an infant, wash hands again before continuing and before feeding another child.
9. Oversee mealtime and encourage children not to share food, plates, or utensils. Like-

wise, do not allow children to eat foods that have been dropped on the floor.

10. Discard all food left on plates at the end of mealtime.
11. Do not reuse lunch bags or bags from other items because of possible contamination.
12. Food should be stored away from areas where diapering is done.

## **How to Properly Defrost Foods**

1. Plan ahead to allow time for defrosting food properly.
2. Defrost food in the refrigerator. If defrosting outside the refrigerator, place food in a sealed plastic bag and immerse in cold water, changing the water frequently.
3. Do not refreeze foods unless the package label states that it is safe to refreeze.
4. Follow instructions for microwave defrost as given in operating manuals of microwave.

## **What to Do If the Freezer Fails or The Power Goes Out**

1. Keep the refrigerator-freezer door closed.
2. If your refrigerator-freezer will be shut off for more than two hours, make immediate arrangements for alternate storage of food elsewhere. Transport food in insulated coolers or in thick layers of paper.
3. When the power comes back on, throw away any food with an unusual color or odor. Do not taste this food.
4. If refrigerated foods are above 40 F for more than two hours, most perishable foods will be need to be discarded.
5. Frozen foods can be refrozen if they are at or below 40 F or still contain ice crystals.

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## **SETTINGS (cont.)**

### **Infant Formula**

Prepared infant formula or bottled milk should be refrigerated and clearly labeled with the child's first and last names. Any formula or bottled breast milk not consumed by an infant may be used later in the day if dated and stored in the refrigerator. Otherwise, it should be discarded or returned to the parent at the end of the day.

### **Shopping Guidelines**

1. Allow adequate transport time to and from grocery shopping to prevent spoilage of fresh or defrosting of frozen products.
2. Do not buy or use food from containers that are leaking, bulging or severely dented.
3. Do not buy jars that are cracked or have bulging lids or cans that are bulging or leaking.
4. Purchase meat and dairy products last. Refrigerate these products as soon as you get to the childcare center.

### **Refrigerating Food**

1. Keep the refrigerator clean and establish a regular cleaning schedule.
2. Defrost the freezer when necessary. Ice buildup prevents refrigerators from cooling properly.
3. Avoid overcrowding in the refrigerator. The more crowded it is, the less cooling effect.
4. Check the gaskets regularly; they should be flexible to keep the cold air from leaking out.
5. Keep a thermometer and check the temperature inside on a regular basis. The temperature should be at or below 40 F.
6. Refrigerate perishable bag lunches. If refrigeration is not available, put a container filled with frozen water, a plastic bag with ice cubes or a cold or frozen beverage into the bag for storage.

### **Freezing Food**

1. Wrap meat in freezer paper, plastic wrap or foil if not already wrapped properly.
2. Date packages using the oldest first.
3. Check the freezer temperature regularly. It should be at or below 0 F.

### **Leftover Food**

1. Do not reuse leftovers that have already been served.
2. Refrigerate unused leftovers immediately. Store in small shallow covered containers. Date packages and discard if not used within 72 hours. Meat can be refrigerated safely for two days.
3. Reheat leftovers all the way through. Bring gravies to a rolling boil.

### **Proper Hand Washing Technique**

Children and babies should have their hands washed: 1) upon arrival to the daycare facility, 2) before eating/preparing food, 3) after toileting/diapering changes, and 4) after touching body secretions 5) after playing outside, especially after playing sandboxes.

Adults (including staff, volunteers, students and parent helpers) should wash their hands: 1) when they arrive at the daycare facility, before starting work, 2) before eating/preparing food, or feeding children, 4) after toileting/diapering a child or using the bathroom themselves, and 4) after handling body secretions.

### **How to Properly Wash Your Hands**

1. Use soap, preferably liquid, and warm running water.
2. Wash your hands for at least 10 seconds while rubbing your hands vigorously as you wash them.
3. Wash ALL surfaces including: back of hands, wrists, between fingers and under nails.

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## **SETTINGS (cont.)**

4. Rinse your hands well. Leave water running.
5. Dry your hands with a single-use towel (e.g., a paper towel)
6. Turn off the water using a PAPER TOWEL instead of your bare hands.
7. Throw the paper towel away.