

# Food Safety

## Tutor's Handbook



# Introduction to Food Safety

## Top Tips for Food Safety

The aim of this short handbook is to provide some top tips for food safety. In this handbook, we will provide you with an overview of the 4 C's of Food Safety. These are:

1. Chilling
2. Cook
3. Clean
4. Cross-contamination

## Tips for Chilling and Freezing

The first tip relates to the temperature that your refrigerator and freezer should be kept at. Do you know this already? Maybe, you do, but members in your group may need to be reminded. The correct temperature for storing food in your fridge is between 0-5 degrees Celsius. Can you say what it is for your freezer? A household freezer should be at least kept at minus 18 degree Celsius, to ensure that it is freezing stored food safely.

When storing left-over food in the refrigerator, the following tips are handy to remember. These tips have been certified by Food Safety Ireland, so it comes from a trustworthy source!

- When you have cooked food and you are not going to eat it straight away or if there are leftovers after

serving, place on a clean plate, cover and refrigerate within two hours.

- Throw away any high-risk food – such as meat products - that has been standing at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Remember to use clean dishes and utensils for cooked food to prevent cross-contamination.
- Ensure all food is cooled before refrigerating. Remember do not put food in the fridge when it is still hot, because it could raise the temperature of the fridge and allow other foods to get too warm.
- Dividing food into smaller portions and putting it in a shallow dish can help to make it cool more quickly.
- When you are cooling a turkey or other large bird, removing the legs will help it cool more quickly.
- It is important that leftover cooked rice is quickly cooled and then refrigerated.
- Leftovers stored in the fridge should be eaten within 3 days.

Food Safety Ireland, have also published the following tips to help us to understand how to safely freeze and de-frost food that is stored in a freezer:

- Before freezing, ensure that all food is cooled for 2-hours and then frozen.
- Keep the freezer door closed and only open when required, so that the temperature of the freezer doesn't drop.
- Do not freeze any foods after their "use-by-date", because they might not be safe to eat.
- There is no upper time limit on how long after freezing you can eat food, from a food safety point of view; however, the longer food is frozen, the worse the quality of the food will be.

When de-frosting food stored in the freezer, it is important to note that most foods do need to be fully defrosted before they can be cooked or eaten. To ensure that your food is thoroughly defrosted before you eat or cook it, follow these tips:

- Defrosting food in the refrigerator is the safest way.
- For every 2-2.5kg of food you are defrosting, you should allow at least 24 hours to defrost it in the fridge.
- Never refreeze food.
- Once food is defrosted, it must be cooked and eaten within 24 hours.
- Do not use a microwave to defrost food, unless you are going to cook and eat it straight away. Defrosting food in a microwave can warm food enough for harmful bacteria to

grow, so it should be cooked immediately to kill off these bacteria at higher temperatures.

- Always review the labels on the packets of pre-cooked and prepacked meals. Some ready meals allow cooking from frozen, and in this case there is no need to defrost the meal beforehand.

## Tips for Cooking

While it is important to thoroughly cook all meat, vegetables, fish and other products before eating, because uncooked meats are so hazardous, we will focus on giving some top tips for preparing and cooking meat in this section.

- Raw meat contains harmful bacteria, so it is important that meat is handled carefully and thoroughly cooked so that it can kill off these harmful bacteria.
- The following meats contain harmful bacteria when raw and therefore should be cooked all the way through:
  - chicken, turkey and all poultry;
  - any minced meat or fish;
  - burgers;
  - sausages;
  - liver;
  - kidneys;
  - kebabs;
  - chicken nuggets.

- Minced meat can contain harmful bacteria inside the meat – in whole cuts or joints of fresh meat, bacteria lives on the outer layer, however this can enter inside the meat when it is minced.
- When cooking smaller meat products – such as chicken nuggets, sausages and burgers – turn regularly throughout cooking to ensure all parts are thoroughly cooked.
- To check if poultry is cooked, you should pierce the thickest part of the meat with a fork or skewer and if the juices run clear, the meat is cooked through.
- For other meats, you should cut the meat in the middle to check that the meat is piping hot throughout.
- Ensure you wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling raw meat.
- Wash all surfaces and utensils touched by the raw meat with disinfectant.
- Ensure you scrub dishes, utensils and surfaces when cleaning – don't just pass a dish cloth over the dirty surfaces.
- Clean your worktop, chopping boards and all surfaces BEFORE and AFTER preparing food.
- Place chopping boards in the dishwasher or wash in very hot water after preparing meat – the higher temperature helps to kill off all bacteria.
- Dish cloths and tea towels should be washed every 2 days to kill bacteria.
- To wash dish cloths and tea towels, use a washing machine or boil cloths in hot water for 15 minutes to destroy bacteria.

### Tips to Avoid Cross-Contamination

To avoid cross-contamination from raw meats to other cooked foods, you should follow these tips:

- Wash hands thoroughly after handling raw meat and poultry – thoroughly means to use warm, soapy water, rub hands together to create a lather, wash under fingernails, between fingers, back and palms of hands and up to the wrists to ensure that there is no bacteria on your hands.
- Be careful when discarding packaging for raw meat – *E Coli* and other harmful bacteria can

### Tips for Cleaning

Regular cleaning in the kitchen is essential to stop the spread of bacteria. To ensure you are cleaning effectively:

- Always use warm, soapy water to clean dishes, utensils and surfaces.

survive on the surface of food packaging for up to 24 hours, so discard of all packaging safely – and wash your hands after handling the packaging.

## How to use this Resource with your Local Health Group?

This handbook presents additional information on the basics of food safety. The information in this handbook could be very useful to your local group members and to supporting them to teach their children and other family members about the importance of food safety. To accompany this handbook, you will also find a short PowerPoint presentation that can be used with your local health network to introduce the topic of food safety to them. This presentation gives some of the basic information that is included in this handbook, but not all of it. The aim of this handbook is to give you extra information so that you can test the knowledge of your group members with a set of simple questions and give them the right answers if they get any wrong. Use the presentation to:

- Talk to the members of your local group about how they handle and store their food and if they have any food safety questions?
- Highlight some of the simple tips for storing and cooking food.
- Highlight some of the dangers of inadequate cleaning and of cross-contamination.

- When shopping, have a separate shopping bag for all raw meat and poultry to ensure there is no contamination from food packaging to other foods.

## Group Activity

Once you have shared the digital resource and the PowerPoint presentation with your group members, you can start a group discussion by asking members the following questions and logging their responses:

- What temperature should your refrigerator be?
- How long after refrigerating should you use up left-over food?
- How long after freezing should you use up left-over food?
- Which meats contain harmful bacteria when raw?
- Why is it important to thoroughly cook minced meat?
- How do you check if poultry is cooked through?
- How often should you clean dish cloths and tea towels?
- How long can *E Coli* live on kitchen surfaces and packaging?

Once you have logged their answers to these questions, you can review the questions they got wrong and share the correct answers with them. You can then lead a short group activity by listing the following food items and asking how they should be stored, working with the group to find the correct answers: Mayonnaise; An open tin of Beans; Chicken breast; Strawberries; Yoghurt; Prawns.



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