



## Food Safety in Child Care Facilities

Proper food handling at home and in child care facilities can reduce the risk of foodborne illness (food poisoning).

### What is foodborne illness?

Foodborne illness is caused by eating foods or drinking beverages contaminated by germs such as bacteria, viruses, molds or parasites.

Germs can be picked up in many ways, for example, by petting your dog, handling your pet turtle, changing diapers or preparing raw foods like meat and poultry.

Contamination occurs when foods or beverages are not prepared or stored safely or when foods and utensils are handled by someone carrying germs. Even healthy people can carry germs.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of foodborne illness vary and include the following:

- Fever
- Stomach cramps
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Symptoms usually go away after 1 to 3 days, but in some cases, foodborne illness can be life-threatening. Children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, seniors and people with a compromised immune system are more likely to get sick and develop a serious illness.

### How can I prevent foodborne illness?

#### Wash Your Hands

Wash your hands after you use the washroom and before you eat or handle any food. Hand washing includes the following steps:

- Remove arm and hand jewelry
- Scrub all parts of your hands, including between fingers and under nails, with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Rinse them under warm water

- Dry your hands with a clean cloth or paper towel

#### Wash and sanitize surfaces and utensils

Always wash and sanitize surfaces where you prepare and serve food. Foodborne illness can be caused by using the same cutting board, plate or utensil to prepare raw meat, poultry or seafood for preparing or serving ready-to-eat foods.

Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices separate from one another and from other ready-to-eat foods. Wash cutting boards, plates and utensils with hot soapy water and then sanitize them before re-using them for cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

Here's how to make your own no-rinse sanitizing solution.

#### How to make a 200 ppm no-rinse sanitizing solution:

- Mix 15 mL (1 tablespoon) of household bleach into 4 litres (1 gallon) of water; or, mix 5 mL (1 teaspoon) of household bleach into 1 litre (4 cups) of water.
- Allow the sanitizer to contact the surface or utensil for at least 1 minute before wiping off with a clean paper towel or allowing it to air dry.

Use B.C.'s FOODSAFE Chlorine Dilution Calculator tool to make up the proper sanitizer strength based on the concentration of your bleach product  
[www.foodsafe.ca/dilution-calculator.html](http://www.foodsafe.ca/dilution-calculator.html)

**Caution:** Mixing bleach with products that contain acid or ammonia makes a toxic gas that causes serious breathing problems, choking and potentially death.

Dishcloths are ideal breeding grounds for germs. Use a clean dishcloth every day and wash dishcloths frequently in the washing machine. To quickly sanitize your dishcloth, wet it completely and place in the microwave on high for 1 minute. Do not microwave a dry dishcloth.

#### Refrigerate foods

Return foods to the fridge or freezer right after using them. Perishable foods, such as meat, milk or cheese,

should not be kept at room temperature for longer than 2 hours. Keep cold foods at 4°C (40°F) or colder.

### Cook Foods

- Cooking foods to an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) or hotter kills most germs
- Use a digital probe-tip food thermometer to check the temperature of the food. Insert the probe tip into the deepest part of the food without touching a bone, if there is one
- Keep hot foods at 60°C (140°F) or hotter
- Reheat leftovers to at least 74°C (165°F)
- Food reheated in a microwave should reach 74°C (165°F). Let food stand covered for 2 minutes afterwards
- Cool cooked foods from 60°C (140°F) to 20°C (68°F) within 2 hours and from 20°C (68°F) to 4°C (40°F) within 4 hours

### Don't prepare foods when you are sick

If you have any of the symptoms of foodborne illness, or if you have any infected cuts or sores, you should not handle, prepare or serve food for others.

### Which foods should child care facilities serve?

Child care facilities should buy foods from approved sources, such as commercial retail stores or suppliers. Make sure fresh and packaged foods are used by the best before date. Donated foods should only be accepted if they are in unopened packages or in compliance with B.C. guidelines. Make sure these foods have been properly stored. For example, baked products should be in sealed containers. For more information, see the food donation guidelines at [www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/food-donation-guidelines](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/food-donation-guidelines) and guidelines for Food Distribution Organizations (FDOs) at [www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/EH/FPS/Food/FDO%20Guidelines%20with%20Grocery%20or%20Meal%20Program.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/EH/FPS/Food/FDO%20Guidelines%20with%20Grocery%20or%20Meal%20Program.pdf) (PDF 11.86 MB).

### What activities can help children learn about food safety?

Show children how to wash their hands properly, especially after using the washroom, after handling pets, before helping prepare food and before eating. Teach children how to cough and sneeze into their

sleeves and to rewash their hands afterwards. Include hand washing in meal and snack time routines.

You can involve children in basic food preparation to create a simple dish together. To be safe, food that children help prepare for the group should be cooked, for example, choose muffins instead of salad.

### How can parents pack food safely?

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Pack hot food in a thermos. Preheat the thermos with boiling water for 5 minutes. A thermos will keep foods hot, above 60°C (140°F) for about 3 hours, so aim to pack these foods just before leaving the house. Keep cold foods cold using cold packs or put them in the day care fridge until it is time to eat.

### What permits and training are available for child care providers?

A licensed child care facility that prepares and handles food regularly may require a food service permit under the Public Health Act. If you are unsure, contact your local Health Authority and ask for the Environmental Health Officer.

The Caring About Food Safety course is strongly recommended for all child care providers. Visit <http://media.openschool.bc.ca/assets/cafs/mainpage/home.html>. For more information, see Ministry of Health Food Safety & Security [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety/food-safety-courses](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety/food-safety-courses)

### For More Information

- [HealthLinkBC File #59a Food Safety: Easy Ways to Make Food Safer](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #59b Food Safety for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables](#)
- [HealthLinkBC File #76 Foods to Avoid for People at Higher Risk of Food-borne Illness](#)
- Food Flair™ Early Learning Practitioners Resource at [www.vch.ca/Documents/Food-Flair-resource-manual.pdf](http://www.vch.ca/Documents/Food-Flair-resource-manual.pdf) (PDF 9.7 MB)
- Child Care Facilities: Safe and Healthy Food at [www.vch.ca/Documents/Child-care-facilities-safe%20healthy-food.pdf](http://www.vch.ca/Documents/Child-care-facilities-safe%20healthy-food.pdf) (PDF 609 KB)

You can also contact your community nutritionist, or call **8-1-1** and speak to a registered dietitian.