



## Food Safety in Child Care Facilities

Proper food handling at home and in child care facilities can reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses (food poisoning).

### What is food-borne illness?

Food-borne illness is caused by eating foods or drinking beverages contaminated by pathogens (germs) such as bacteria, viruses, moulds, or parasites.

Pathogens can be picked up in many ways, such as, by petting your dog, handling your pet turtle, changing diapers or preparing raw foods, especially 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 pathogens.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of food-borne illness vary and include the following:

- fever;
- stomach cramps;
- diarrhea;
- nausea; and/or
- vomiting.

Symptoms can last for hours, days, or even months. They can be mild or serious enough for you to go to the hospital. Food-borne illness can cause serious health complications for children.

### How can I prevent food-borne illness?

#### Wash Your Hands

Wash your hands after you use the washroom and before you eat or handle any food. Hand washing includes scrubbing all parts of your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and rinsing 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. Many cases of food-borne illness are caused by using a cutting board, plate or utensil to prepare raw meat and then using that same cutting board, plate or utensil to prepare or serve ready-to-eat foods. Cutting boards, plates and utensils must always

be washed and sanitized before foods are placed on them.

You can make your own no-rinse 220 ppm (parts per million) 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 to air dry.

Use Public Health Ontario's chlorine dilution calculator tool to make up the proper sanitizer strength based on the concentration of your bleach product  
[www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/Tools/Pages/Dilution-Calculator.aspx](http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/Tools/Pages/Dilution-Calculator.aspx)

Wash your dishcloths frequently and change them daily. Dishcloths are ideal breeding grounds for pathogens. You can quickly sterilize a moist dishcloth by microwaving it for 1 minute.

#### Separate foods

Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices separate from one another, and from other ready-to-eat foods.

Use separate utensils and dishes for raw meat and cooked meat or other ready-to-eat foods.

#### 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

- Most pathogens can be killed by cooking foods to an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) or hotter.
- Always use a food thermometer to check the temperature of the food. Insert an instant-read thermometer 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) and be allowed to stand covered for 2 minutes afterwards.
- Cool cooked foods to 20°C (68°F) within 2 hours and to 4°C (40°F) within 4 hours.

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

If you have any of the symptoms of food-borne 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 suppliers. Make sure fresh and packaged foods are used by the best before date. Donated food should only be accepted if it is unopened and has been properly stored, such as sealed containers of baked products.

### Which foods have a lower risk of causing food-borne illness?

The following foods are less likely to cause food-borne illness:

- applesauce and other canned fruits;
- firm skinned fruits and vegetables, such as apples and carrots, scrubbed with a clean brush while washing;
- baked products, such as breads, rolls, bagels, muffins, and cookies with no meat, fish, cream or cheese fillings;
- plain crackers and unsweetened dry cereal.

### How can facilities help children learn about food safety?

Meal and snack time routines should always include washing hands before eating. Show children how to wash their hands properly, especially after using the washroom, after handling pets and before eating.

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, such as muffins instead of salad. Teach children the importance of carefully washing their hands, and how to cough and sneeze into their sleeves and to rewash their hands.

### How can parents pack food safely?

Parents should 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 parents should pack these foods just before leaving the house. Cold foods should be kept cool by

using cold packs, or stored in the 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 permit under the Public Health Act. For more information, visit [www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/11\\_210\\_99](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/11_210_99).

The Caring about Food Safety course is strongly recommended for all child care providers. For more information, see Ministry of Health Food Safety & Security [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety).

### For More Information

For more information on food safety, see the following:

- [HealthLinkBC File #59a Food Safety: Easy Ways to Make Food Safe](#)
- [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](#)
- Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education [www.canfightbac.org/en/](http://www.canfightbac.org/en/).
- Food Flair™ Early Learning Practitioners Resource at [www.vch.ca/media/Food\\_Flair\\_Resource\\_Manual\\_December\\_2014.pdf](http://www.vch.ca/media/Food_Flair_Resource_Manual_December_2014.pdf).
- Healthy Families BC – Recipes and Tips for School Lunches [www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/blog/recipes-and-tips-school-lunches](http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/blog/recipes-and-tips-school-lunches)

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

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles) or your local public health unit.

Click on [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca) or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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