Food Safety for Families

Separate

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Don't Cross-Contaminate!

Dear Parents,

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria (germs), parasites, and viruses are spread from one surface or food to another. Cross-contamination occurs when handling raw meat, seafood, poultry, or eggs, and then handling ready-to-eat foods without washing surfaces or hands. Practicing safe food handling practices begins as early as shopping in the supermarket, and extends all the way to placing food on the table for your family.

Preventing Cross-Contamination

Preventing cross-contamination starts at the grocery store. Buy refrigerated and frozen foods at the end of your shopping trip to keep foods cold for as long as possible. Buy raw meat, poultry, and seafood last since these foods are the most important to keep the coldest. Place your raw foods in plastic bags provided in the grocery section to prevent juices from leaking and contaminating other foods.

Separate meats, poultry, and seafood from raw fruits and vegetables in your grocery cart, on the conveyor belt at the supermarket, and in your shopping bags.

When you return home from the grocery store, immediately put raw foods in the refrigerator or freezer for later use.

2 Hour Rule

Never let raw foods (eggs, meats, poultry, or fish), fresh cut fruits or vegetables, or cooked food sit at room temperature for more than **2** hours before refrigerating or freezing (**1** hour when the temperature is above 90°F).

Food Storage

Proper food storage helps maintain food quality by retaining flavor, color, texture and nutrients, and reduces the chance of causing disease from harmful bacteria. Foil, airtight containers, plastic wraps or bags are the best choices for storing most foods in the refrigerator. Open dishes may result in dried-out foods, refrigerator odors, mold growth and loss of nutrients.

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Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems.

Food Placement

Where you put food in the refrigerator affects air circulation and efficiency. Place food in the refrigerator to allow air circulation and quick cooling of food. Foil, large trays or other materials prevent air circulation and proper cooling.

Some foods like milk, leftovers, and meats should be kept colder than others. The coldest part of the refrigerator is usually the area nearest the freezer compartment, but a refrigerator thermometer will provide an accurate check of your refrigerator for the coldest area.

Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other food in your refrigerator. Place raw foods in sealed containers or plastic bags. Placing raw meats in sealed containers will prevent the juices of the meat, poultry, or seafood from dripping onto other foods in the refrigerator. Place raw meat and poultry below ready to eat foods.

It's Safe to Separate!

Preparing Food

When preparing foods, always start with **CLEAN** hands and surfaces. Wash hands for a **minimum of 15** seconds with hot soapy water (sing the Happy Birthday song twice). Clean surfaces with hot soapy water as well. Use glass, plastic, or other non-porous cutting boards. Porous materials like wood, provide a hiding place for bacteria. Use a separate cutting board for fresh produce or cooked food. Use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood products. Color coded cutting boards help to keep each cutting board separate for its special use. Wash hands, cutting boards, dishes, and utensils with hot, soapy water after each use, **especially** after handling raw foods.

Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs without proper cleaning.