



FEED THEM SAFE

Guidance on food
hygiene and infection
control for childminders



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Introduction

It is estimated that there are about four times as many incidents of food poisoning resulting from food prepared in the home than there are from food prepared in commercial premises such as restaurants, hotels and take-aways.

Anyone who has suffered from food poisoning will tell you, it's not a pleasant experience. At best it may mean spending a few days in bed with symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach cramps, fever, headaches and nausea. At worst, food poisoning can be fatal.

It is the responsibility of every food business to make sure that the food they provide is fit to eat.

What you may not realise is that, as a childminder, if you provide food for the children you care for, you are running a food business.

This means you are required to comply with the requirements of the Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006. Food safety enforcement officers from the local council may, at any reasonable time, inspect the parts of your house used to store or prepare food.

This booklet is designed to help you comply with the regulations, and more importantly, take the necessary steps to ensure the food you serve is safe to eat.

Under the Children Act 2004, Ofsted inspectors are required to inspect and report on how well you help children to be healthy. This will include how you store and prepare food, prevent the spread of infection and encourage children to eat healthily. Further guidance on what the inspector looks for is available in the 'National Standards and Guidance for under 8's Day Care and Childminding' and 'Are you ready for your Inspection'.



Buying food

- Always buy food from reputable suppliers.
- Use a cool box or cool bag to carry home high-risk foods, especially in warm weather.
- Use ice packs in the cool box/bag to help keep food cool.
- Make sure raw and ready-to-eat foods, are properly wrapped in shopping bags. Wherever possible put them in separate bags.
- Try to buy chilled and frozen foods last.
- After buying chilled or frozen foods take them home without delay.

Storing food

- Store raw meat and poultry in covered containers at the bottom of the fridge to avoid any risk of juices dripping on to foods which are ready to eat.
- Always keep eggs in the fridge.
- Do not store opened cans of food in the fridge. Put the contents into a suitable container such as a covered plastic bowl before refrigerating.
- Regularly check your fridge to make sure it is working properly (0°C to 5°C). A simple thermometer kept in the fridge will make this easier.
- Defrost the fridge regularly.
- Never overload your fridge. They work best when air can circulate around the food.



- Never leave the fridge door open longer than necessary.
- Wash fridges with hot soapy water followed by a disinfectant cleaner. Rinse and allow to dry before replacing the food.
- Keep all stored food covered to stop it being contaminated and to prevent insects and other pests getting in.
- Regularly clean food cupboards as spillages can harbour germs.
- Clean and disinfect bread-bins regularly to help prevent mould growth.

Preparing food

- Always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food. An anti-bacterial soap is recommended.
- Regularly clean and disinfect work surfaces and equipment. A disinfectant cleaner will help kill germs and prevent cross-contamination.
- Clean work surfaces and spillages as you go.
- Prepare raw and ready-to-eat foods separately.
- Use different chopping boards and knives to keep raw foods such as meat and poultry separate from ready-to-eat foods. If this is not possible, clean and disinfect between use.
- Thoroughly defrost meat, poultry and fish before cooking.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen – they can carry disease.
- Do not use foods after their 'use by' date.



Cooking food

- Make sure food is cooked thoroughly until it is piping hot right through to the middle. Burgers, sausages, etc should be cooked until the juices run clear and no visible pink remains.
- Always follow cooking instructions on packaging carefully.
- Never dip your fingers in food to taste. Always use a clean spoon.

General advice

- Food which is to be eaten cold should be cooled as quickly as possible after cooking (within 1½ hours) and then refrigerated until used. Never put hot foods straight into the fridge.
- Never 'warm up' left-overs. It is best not to use them at all. If you do, make sure they are piping hot right through to the middle. Never heat up leftovers more than once.
- Never serve food containing raw eggs, eg home-made mayonnaise.
- Dish cloths can carry millions of germs which can then be spread around the kitchen when the cloth is used. You should soak dish cloths regularly in a bleach solution, then rinse and dry thoroughly.
- Always wash your hands before preparing food, after handling pets and visiting the toilet.
- Never dry your hands on tea towels – use separate hand towels.
- Cuts and burns should be covered with waterproof dressings.
- Raw vegetables and meat both carry harmful germs and both are often cleaned and prepared in and around the sink. It is therefore important that the sink and surrounding area are cleaned regularly with disinfectant.



Food allergy and intolerance

- Food allergy and food intolerance are both types of food sensitivity. When someone has a food allergy, their immune system reacts to a particular food as if it isn't safe. If someone has a severe food allergy, this can cause a life-threatening reaction.
- Food intolerance doesn't involve the immune system and is generally not life-threatening. But if someone eats a food they are intolerant to, this could make them feel ill or affect their long-term health.
- In theory, any food can cause a food allergy. But in fact just a handful of foods are to blame for 90 per cent of allergic reactions to food in the UK. These foods are known as the 'big eight'. They are: milk, eggs, peanuts (groundnuts or monkey nuts), nuts (including brazil nuts, hazelnuts, almonds and walnuts), fish, shellfish (including mussels, crab and shrimps), soya and wheat.
- In children, the most common allergic reactions to food are to milk, peanuts, nuts, eggs, soya and wheat. Usually children grow out of most types of food allergy in early childhood. In adults, most allergic reactions are to peanuts, nuts, fish, shellfish and wheat.
- It is essential to look carefully at the label on any pre-packed food you buy if you have a food allergy or intolerance, or if you are buying food for someone with a known allergy. Even if you have bought the product before, you should still check the label. The recipe might have changed.
- As well as the ingredients list, many food products have a statement or an allergy advice box on the label saying they contain a certain food, for example nuts, milk or eggs. Some manufacturers use symbols to show this.



- From November 2005, food labelling rules require pre-packed food sold in the UK or the rest of the European Union (EU) to show clearly on the label if it contains one of the following: peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, macadamia nuts, eggs, milk, crustaceans (including prawns, crabs and lobsters); fish, sesame seeds, cereals containing gluten (including wheat, rye, barley and oats); soya, celery, mustard, sulphur dioxide and sulphites (preservatives used in some foods and drinks) at levels above 10mg per kg or per litre.
- The new rules should make it easier for people to avoid the above foods in pre-packed food products, including alcoholic drinks. However, some people are sensitive to foods that are not on this list, so always check the ingredients carefully.

Infection control

Food poisoning and other infectious illnesses can take many forms and be caused by several different kinds of germs. It is vital that if you, or any of the children you are responsible for, develop food poisoning-like symptoms you know what action to take.

When children are ill:

- Seek medical advice – this is particularly important in the case of young children.
- Sick children should be kept at home until a 48 hour period has passed during which there have been no symptoms.
- Clean and disinfect toilet accidents on floors and other hard surfaces.
- Wash hands thoroughly after taking children to the toilet and after changing nappies.



- Toilets and potties should be disinfected after use.
- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning up and place used paper towels etc into a disposable bag.

When you are ill:

- Do not try to look after children if you are ill with the symptoms outlined above.
- Do not prepare food until at least 48 hours after your symptoms have stopped.

If you are in any doubt seek medical advice or contact your local environmental health department. Contact details are listed on page 12.

Training

The law requires food handlers to receive supervision, instruction and/or training to a level which is suitable for the job they do.

You must, at the very least, be aware, and understand the principles of food hygiene and the safe handling of food. Information leaflets from your local council may help you gain the required knowledge.

Many childminders have found attending short basic food hygiene courses run by local councils, education establishments and private training companies helpful. Contact details of local training providers can be found on the website www.cieh-coursefinder.com. You will also receive a certificate on successful completion of the course.



Feedback

If you are unhappy, for any reason, with the service provided please do not hesitate to contact your local environmental health service at the address given on page 12.

Any suggestions you might have on how our service could be improved would also be gratefully received.

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If you require this leaflet in another format or language please contact Norwich City Council.

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