P A T I E N T Education

SCIENCE OF CHOICES—FACT SHEET FOR CONSUMERS

Improve Your Kitchen and Food Safety

Spending time in your kitchen should be enjoyable. But it could be a hazard to your health and your family's. More than 40% of home fires start in the kitchen. Knife cuts send thousands of people to the emergency department each year. Improper food preparation, cooking, and storage lead annually to about 48 million cases of food-borne illness in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Following a few safety guidelines, however, can keep your kitchen and food safe.

Kitchen Safety

Take 5 simple steps to improve kitchen safety.

Arrange and Maintain Your Kitchen for Safe Use

- Store items you use regularly at convenient heights. Place heavier appliances in lower cabinets or shelves.
- Use a small stepladder to reach higher shelves. Do not stand on chairs, kitchen stools, or other unstable items.
- Clean up spills on floors and counters quickly.
- Keep cabinet doors and drawers closed.

Cook With Care and Attention

- Never leave cooking food unattended. Stay in the kitchen if you are frying, sautéing, or broiling foods. Check regularly on simmering foods on the cooktop or foods baking in the oven. Do not leave the house while food is cooking.
- Turn pot handles in to prevent pots being knocked over.
- Use heat-resistant potholders and oven mitts to handle hot pots and pans.
- Avoid distraction while cooking. Do not talk on the phone or watch television. Do not hold a child while stirring a pot or checking the oven.

Prevent Kitchen Fires

- Do not wear clothing with loose, floppy sleeves or anything that dangles while preparing food. Tie long hair back.
- Turn off burners on the stove before removing pots.
- When frying or cooking with oil or fat, do not leave the stove.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy in the kitchen. It should be rated for kitchen and grease fires.
- Do not overload electrical outlets or use extension cords.
- Put out small fires by sliding a lid over the top of the pot. You may also smother the fire with baking soda or salt. If you use a fire extinguisher, direct the stream at the base of the fire, not the flames. If the fire is larger, get yourself and the family out of the house and call 9-1-1.

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Science of Choices Fact Sheets are sponsored by the ConAgra Foods Science Institute. This handout is from your health care provider and provides a general overview that may not apply to everyone. Be sure to discuss how to use this information with your health care provider.

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Practice Knife Safety

- Keep knives sharp. More accidents occur from cutting with dull knives.
- Store knives in a knife block, not loose in a drawer.
- Cut on a stable surface, such as a cutting board. Do not cut foods in your hand.
- Never use a knife to open a can or for other tasks for which it is not designed.

Supervise Children in the Kitchen and Keep Pets Out

- Children and pets underfoot in the kitchen are a major hazard. Adults can trip. Children can be burned by hot pots, appliances, and foods and hurt by knives.
- Teach children kitchen safety early. Help them enjoy cooking by supervising them in learning age-appropriate tasks. Teach them the dangers of hot pots and foods and of sharp knives.

Food Safety

Enjoy good food and avoid food-borne illness by following these 4 steps. We have adapted them from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' home food safety program at www.HomeFoodSafety.org.

Keep It Clean

- Wash hands with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds before handling foods.
- Wash hands between handling raw foods, including meats, and cooked foods. If you use gloves, change them between tasks and wash hands before putting on new gloves.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before preparing. Do not wash meat or poultry.

Avoid Cross-Contamination

- Store raw foods and cooked foods separately in the refrigerator. Store uncooked meat, poultry, and fish below fresh produce and cooked foods.
- Use separate cutting boards and serving dishes for raw and cooked foods. Wash cutting boards and knives in hot, soapy water or in the dishwasher (using high heat dry cycle).
- Clean counters and sinks with hot soapy water, or use a cleaning solution of 1 teaspoon bleach to 1 quart warm water.

Cook Foods Properly

- Keep food hot after cooking. Do not let foods sit out more than 2 hours (1 hour in hot weather).
- Use a thermometer to check internal temperatures when grilling meat or poultry.
- Follow package instructions when microwaving prepared foods.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F.

Refrigerate Foods Promptly and Properly

- After shopping, immediately refrigerate produce, meats, poultry, seafood, and other foods that need to be kept cool.
- Keep the refrigerator at 40°F or cooler. The best setting for the freezer is 0°F.
- Marinate and thaw foods in the refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter.
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly.

For More Information

Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics—www.HomeFoodSafety.org
US Department of Health & Human Services—www.foodsafety.gov