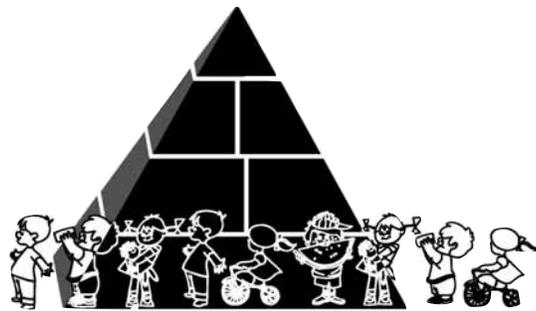


Mealtime Memo

FOR CHILD CARE



2005

Safe Food Storage

Introduction

Have you ever thought about why we keep things in the refrigerator and freezer, or store foods in airtight containers? How foods are stored affects both quality and safety. Improperly stored food can lead to food spoilage and possible illness. One way workers show they keep food safe is by maintaining proper storage conditions.

In a child care center, it is the responsibility of the workers to make sure that the food is safe for the children to eat. Children are especially at risk for foodborne illness because their immature immune systems are not as able to fight off an illness.

everywhere — in the air, soil, and water — and may be transmitted to food by animals, rodents, or humans. Microorganisms grow more rapidly at temperatures between 41 °F and 135 °F. This temperature range is called the temperature danger zone. Food should be handled so that the amount of time the food is in the temperature danger zone is kept to a minimum.

Keep raw meats separate from ready-to-eat foods. Use an ice chest or insulated container to transport cold foods from the grocery store or to the park. Store refrigerated and frozen foods as soon as you return from food shopping. Rotate foods to ensure the oldest product is used first.



It is important to keep food safe at all times. This includes all steps the food goes through from the time it is purchased to the time it is cooked and served.

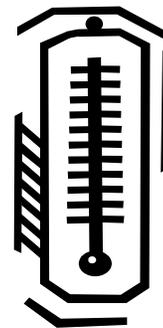
Keeping Food Safe During Storage

The proper storage of foods minimizes potential contamination and growth of microorganisms. Microorganisms are so small that they cannot be seen. They are found

Storing Foods in the Refrigerator

The refrigerator should be at a temperature that maintains food at 41 °F or below. For best practice, check the temperature of all refrigerators and record daily. Here are some general tips for storing foods in the refrigerator:

- Do not overstock the refrigerator. Allow the cool air to circulate freely to chill foods as quickly as possible.
- Label and date all foods.
- Speed the cooling of hot foods and minimize the time in the temperature danger zone by transferring to shallow containers.
- Store raw or uncooked foods below ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.
- Clean refrigerators often and as needed.



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Storing Foods in the Freezer

Freezing food does not kill microorganisms but usually does prevent them from multiplying to a level that can cause foodborne illness. The correct temperature for the freezer is 0 °F or below. As with refrigerators, the temperature should be monitored and recorded regularly. Do not thaw frozen foods at room temperature; this is in the temperature danger zone. Here are some general tips for safely storing foods in the freezer:

- Arrange foods to allow cold air to circulate around the food.
- Store frozen foods in moisture-proof materials or containers to maintain the quality of the food.



Storing Food in Dry Storage

Dry storage is used for foods that do not require refrigeration or freezing. Foods generally stored in the dry storage area include foods such as canned goods, flour, sugar, rice, and cereal. Some fruits and vegetables, such as bananas, onions, and potatoes, may also be stored in the dry storage area. The following guidelines will help ensure that foods stored in this area maintain their quality and remain safe:

- Maintain the dry storage room temperature between 50 °F and 70 °F.
- Keep the area clean and dry by having a cleaning schedule for floors, walls, shelving, and light fixtures.
- Store all items 6 to 8 inches off the floor so that all areas of the floor can be cleaned.



- Date all items when they are placed in storage.
- Items removed from the original container, such as rice or flour, should be placed in air-tight containers made for food storage and labeled with the contents and date placed in storage.
- Use FIFO (First In, First Out) so that older items are used first.
- Always store chemicals in a separate area from food and food-related items. Chemicals should be stored out of the reach of children and should not be used by unauthorized personnel and visitors.

Proper storage of food reassures you of the safety of the food. If there is any doubt about the safety of a food item, it should be thrown out. ***If in doubt, throw it out.*** There is no reason to take chances with the health and well-being of the children in your center. The Appendix section of *Serving It Safe, 2nd Edition* provides temperature forms you can use to record food storage temperatures. You can find these forms at the following Web link: <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/sis/refglosapp.pdf>.

In addition, the Child Care Mini-Posters contain further information about safe handling of food. You can download these posters at http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/postindx_cc.htm.

It is important to follow the guidelines given to you by your State agency or local health department, which may vary from the information provided in this document.

Reference

National Food Service Management Institute. (2002). *Serving it safe* (2nd ed). University, MS: Author.

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For more information, contact NFSMI at 800-321-3054 or www.nfsmi.org/Information/Newsletters/Mealtime_memo_index.html.