# Safe Food Handling Policy and Procedure

## Purpose

To ensure that all employees handling any food items are working within the Australia Food Standards and take all precautions to ensure that participants are consuming safe food.

## Scope

This policy and procedure relates to all employees of All About You – Disability Services.

## Policy and procedure

All food must be protected from contamination. Food contamination can be:

**Biological** – such as bacteria that may cause vomiting and diarrhoea. Serious cases can lead to paralysis and death.

**Physical** – such as foreign objects including insects, glass, plastic or metal. These can cause choking, broken teeth and internal injuries.

**Chemical** – such as cleaning products, fly spray and naturally occurring toxins and allergens. These can cause poisoning and severe reactions.

## Training

Employees of All About You – Disability Services must be trained in safe food handling practices. Many options are available and training does not need to be a formal course. For example, completion of all 'I'M ALERT' modules fulfil this requirement. 'I'M ALERT' is a free online training package available at www.imalert.com.au.

Training should be repeated every three years.

## Personal hygiene

Good hand hygiene is essential to preventing food-borne illness:

- Wash hands:
    i. before starting food preparation
    ii. after going to the toilet
    iii. after blowing nose
    iv. after changing nappies
    v. after touching raw meats etc
- Cover wounds with a water-proof dressing.

- Food should not be handled by anyone who has symptoms of diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, sore throat with a fever, or jaundice. These symptoms can be an indication of an infectious illness that can be passed on to others.

## Product choice

- Do not use food from damaged packaging.
- Do not use raw milk from cows or goats as it is not safe for children.
- Home grown vegetables are great for kids – brush off visible dirt and wash in running water.
- Home produced eggs are also fine – wipe off visible dirt with a clean cloth and cook thoroughly. Avoid eggs that are cracked or very dirty.
- Check 'use-by' dates and the condition of packaging before purchasing any foods.

Please note: There is an important difference between a 'use-by' and 'best-before' date:

- A product may not be safe to eat when past the 'use-by' date.
- A 'best-before' date indicates when the food reduces in quality but will most likely remain safe to eat.

## Storage

- Participants foods must comply with food laws – keep participants foods separate from home-use foods.
- Use separate cupboards, refrigerator shelves or marked containers to avoid any mix ups.

## Chilled food

The smell and look of food is not a good guide of safety. Bacteria that can cause illness do not always visibly spoil the food or make it smell 'off':

- Keep cold foods below 5˚C. The easiest way to do this is to keep a thermometer in the fridge and check the temperature often.
- Follow storage and shelf life instructions on the label.
- Home-made meals can be kept in the fridge for two to three days.
- Keep raw meats where they cannot drip juices on to ready-to-eat food. Keep them on the bottom shelf of the fridge or in a separate compartment or sealed container.

## Frozen food

- Keep frozen food frozen and do not refreeze once thawed.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on shelf life, thawing and cooking.

## Preparation

- Do not touch ready-to-eat foods with bare hands. Use gloves, tongs or similar.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in running water before cutting and serving.
- Prepare raw meat in a way that it cannot contaminate other foods. Use separate chopping boards and utensils for meats and other foods.
- Cover foods prepared in advance with cling wrap or keep them in lidded containers.
- Do not use any foods that are past their 'use-by' date.
- Defrost foods in the refrigerator, under running cold water or in the microwave. If a microwave is used, cook the food immediately after its defrosted.

## Cooking meals

- Heat meals cooked from scratch to above 75˚C.
- A probe thermometer should be used to check food temperatures.
- Always place the probe into the centre of the food and wait until the reading stabilises.

## Cooling

- If meals are prepared in advance, it is important to cool foods to below 5˚C as quickly as possible.
- As soon as the food stops steaming it should go into the fridge.
- Speed up cooling by putting the food into smaller containers, standing the container in cold water or move it to a cooler place.
- Label the meal container with the date of cooking.

## Reheating

- There is no specified temperature for reheating meals – reheat until steaming hot throughout.
- If using a microwave, use a microwave-safe container.

## Service

- Use tongs or wear gloves to handle and serve ready-to-eat food.
- Do not allow perishable food to be out of the refrigerator for more than four hours.

## Cleaning and sanitising

- Keep the kitchen clean.
- Benches should be cleaned with hot, soapy water and left to dry.

- Food contact surfaces such as cutlery, cutting boards, plates and cups must be sanitised at the end of the day.
- Use separate cups and plates for each participant.
- The easiest way to sanitise utensils and cutting boards is by using a dishwasher.
- If the dishwasher has a sanitising cycle, use it when washing equipment.
- Food grade chemical sanitisers may also be used.

## Premises

- Keep premises free of pests and ensure the kitchen is pest proof with fly screening or tight-fitting doors and windows kept closed during food preparation.
- Keep pets out of the kitchen.

## Cleaning and Sanitising

There is an important difference between cleaning and sanitising:

**Cleaning** – the process of using detergent and water to remove visible dust, grease, dirt, stains and odours from all surfaces, utensils and equipment.

**Sanitising** – the process of killing food poisoning bacteria which is achieved by using heat and/or chemicals.

## Chemicals

**Detergents** – soap in a liquid form that attracts and washes away grease, dirt and debris from the surface. Detergents do not kill bacteria.

**Sanitisers** – chemicals that are used after detergents. Sanitisers will kill and reduce the number of bacteria and spores.

**Disinfectants** – common household cleaning products that are suitable for toilets and floors but not on food contact surfaces. They must not be used as sanitisers.

## Sanitising

The use of chemicals is the most common method for killing food poisoning bacteria. Heat can also be used. Food businesses must make sure that any sanitiser used is ‘food grade’ – that is, safe for food contact surfaces.

What must I sanitise?

Any surface, utensil or piece of equipment that comes into contact with food must be cleaned and sanitised.

Surfaces and equipment that must be cleaned and sanitised include:

- glasses and cups
- crockery and cutlery
- food storage containers
- chopping boards
- thermometers
- utensils.

How do I sanitise?

**Heat**

Dishwashers or hot water in a sink/large container are both ways of sanitising smaller items.

If sanitising using hot water in a sink, the water must be at least 77˚C (ie near to boiling) when put in the sink. Leave items in the water for at least 30 seconds to soak.

## Chemicals

If access to a dishwasher is not available, a chemical sanitiser can be used:

- For items that fit in a double bowl sink – wash in a detergent and hot water in the first bowl and then sanitise using a chemical sanitiser and warm water in the second bowl.
- Where a double bowl sink is not available, use a sink to wash items and then use a large container to sanitise.
- Items that do not fit in your sink should be thoroughly cleaned and then sanitiser applied with a spray bottle.

## More information

If there is uncertainty regarding any of the information in this policy and procedure, the Food Safety Unit, Department of Health and Human Services can be contacted by phone 1800 671 738 or email public.health@dhhs.tas.gov.au.

Further information can be obtained from the Food Standards Australia New Zealand website at www.foodstandards.gov.au.