



DENVER
THE MILE HIGH CITY

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Serving Safe Snacks and Meals at CACFP Sites

"Better safe than sorry" is the motto to live by when it comes to food.

Every year, there are millions of illnesses in the United States caused by bacteria in food. Children are at special risk for these illnesses because their immune systems are still developing.

This food safety information has been prepared by the Denver Department of Environmental Health for CACFP distribution sites. Visit us online to find more food safety information at www.denvergov.org/phi.

Learn the Basics

Follow these simple rules when preparing and handling after school meals/snacks:

- Wash your hands before serving snacks.
- Clean serving counters and utensils before and after handling snacks.
- Never touch unwrapped food with your bare hands.
- Every food has a time and temperature. Follow the guidelines below.

Washing Hands: The Advanced Course

Thought you knew everything there was to know about washing hands? Did you know that washing your hands is the single most important thing that *you* can do to prevent illness in yourself and others?

Follow these easy guidelines:

- Wash your hands with soap and water before handling food; so should the kids you serve. Make it an activity you do together.
- Wash properly:
 1. Wet your hands with water.
 2. Add soap. Rub your hands together for 20 seconds (sing Row, Row, Row Your Boat three times). Be sure to clean your fingernails while you're at it.
 3. Rinse off the soap.
 4. Dry your hands with a paper towel.
- If you get interrupted and need to answer the telephone, sign a document or do anything else, you must wash your hands again before getting back to snack detail.

Ask students to wash their hands before eating a snack. This is a very important step that can help prevent the spread of flu-like illness between people.

TIP: Besides a verbal reminder to do so, why not post hand washing instructions in the bathrooms and food areas as well?

Washing Counters and Utensils

Wipe your counter tops with a sanitizing wipe or sanitizing solution before setting up snacks to give out. You can make your own sanitizing solution by mixing one teaspoon of bleach with a gallon of water. Do NOT add extra bleach—too much bleach can be toxic, create fumes, and hurt your hands. If you make your own sanitizing solution with bleach, you should obtain chlorine test strips that you can use to test the concentration of the sanitizer. To be effective, the concentration should be between 50 and 200 parts per million (test strip should turn a purple color).

Serving Snacks 101

Playing it safe doesn't end after your hands are washed. Never touch any food that is not pre-packaged (wrapped and sealed) with your bare hands.

If the food is not pre-packaged (such as with whole apples or oranges), put on plastic gloves AFTER washing your hands and BEFORE preparing the snack.

If you are interrupted—darn, there's the phone again!—you must re-wash your hands and put on new plastic gloves before returning to snack preparation.

Storing Food Safely: Time and Temperature

First, make sure that where the food will be stored is clean. All food and beverages must always be stored at least six inches off the floor.

When snacks are pre-packaged, always check the date on the snack item to make sure that it has not passed the expiration date and is still fresh.

Making sure hot foods are hot and cold foods are cold is an important part of food safety. Follow these simple rules:

- Check the temperature of foods when they are delivered. Hot foods must be 135 degrees F or hotter, and cold foods must be 41 degrees F or colder. Immediately move food to refrigerator or hot box if they will not be served immediately.
- Check the label and/or directions for the correct temperature to serve any food item.
- Always use a thermometer and learn how to use it correctly.
- Refrigerators must be kept at 40 degrees or below. Bacteria grow more easily at temperatures between 40 and 135 degrees—that's why it's important to keep cold foods cold (below 40 degrees) and hot things hot (135 degrees or higher).
- Hot boxes must be heated before putting food in. Use a thermometer to check that hot foods are kept at 135 degrees or higher.
- If snacks/meals are taken out of refrigerator before serving, only allow them to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

How to Calibrate a Food Thermometer

It is important to use a food thermometer to check that your hot and cold units are holding foods at the right temperatures. Thermometers can read inaccurately if they are not calibrated. You should calibrate your food thermometer at least once a week or whenever it is dropped or knocked around.

Dial stem thermometer



Digital thermometer



Follow these simple directions:

- Fill an insulated cup all the way with ice. Fill it halfway with water.
- Let the water/ice mixture sit for a minute (there should be more ice than water in your cup).
- Put the probe of your thermometer all the way in the cup. Allow it to sit in the water/ice mixture for 1-2 minutes or until the pointer stops moving.
- The thermometer should read 32 degrees F. This is the temperature that water freezes and ice melts.
- If it doesn't read 32 degrees and it is a digital thermometer, it needs to be replaced. If it is a dial stem thermometer, you can use a pair of needle nose pliers to adjust the pointer until it reads 32 degrees F in the water/ice mixture.

How to Use a Food Thermometer

- Use an alcohol pad to sanitize the probe of the thermometer.
- When measuring the temperature of packaged foods, put the end of your food thermometer (at least the last 2 inches) tightly between two containers of food. Read the thermometer.
- If the food is not at the required temperature (41 degrees F or less for cold foods; 135 degrees F or greater for hot foods), use an alcohol pad to wipe the end of the thermometer and then puncture the container of food. Put the thermometer into the thickest piece of food and allow the pointer to stop moving. If the food is not at the required temperature, it should be disposed of.

Employee Health

- The most common way illness is spread is through contact with an ill individual. If you have any vomiting or diarrhea, it is very important you stay home so as not to expose other people to your illness.
- People with vomiting or diarrhea symptoms should never handle food for other individuals.
- People who serve food should cover any sores or cuts on their hands with a bandage and a glove.
- If any people complaint that they have become ill from the food that was served, contact your program director promptly to let them know.

Food safety questions? Contact us at phicomments@denvergov.org or at 720-913-1311.