Community Care Tailored Support

Empowering Potential, Inspiring Success

Simple & Tasty

KITCHEN SAFETY, HYGIENE AND FOOD STORAGE

A practical, easy-to-follow guide to preventing food poisoning, contamination, burns and other kitchen accidents.

For older people, people with disability, families, carers and support workers.

Australian food-safety guidance • Illustrated-style quick guides • Everyday checklists

Choose. Prepare. Cook. Store. Stay safe.

How to use this book

This guide supports safer everyday cooking and food handling. It is designed to be read together with the CCTS cookbooks. A person’s allergies, medical advice, mealtime management plan and support needs always come first.

THE FOUR EVERYDAY FOOD-SAFETY HABITS
1. CLEAN hands, benches and utensils.
2. SEPARATE raw food from ready-to-eat food.
3. COOK food thoroughly and check with a thermometer.
4. CHILL food promptly and keep it at safe temperatures.

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1 Before you start and personal safety

Set up the kitchen so the person can cook with confidence and support.

- Wash and dry hands. Tie long hair back. Wear clean clothes and closed-in, non-slip shoes.
- Read the whole recipe and collect ingredients, utensils and any adaptive equipment.
- Clear clutter, spills and trip hazards. Ensure good lighting and a stable work surface.
- Keep mobility aids and wheelchair access clear; position equipment within comfortable reach.
- Check food allergies, prescribed textures, fluid needs and the person’s current mealtime plan.
- Offer choices and participation. Ask permission before assisting and use safe manual-handling techniques.
- Keep pets away from preparation areas. Never leave someone unsupported with knives or heat if they require assistance.

STOP AND CHECK: Is the food in date? Is the fridge cold? Is the bench clean? Are the person’s dietary and swallowing instructions available?

2 Handwashing and personal hygiene

Hands can transfer germs to food even when they look clean.

Wash hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Dry thoroughly with a clean towel or disposable paper towel.

- Before preparing food, eating, or assisting another person to eat.
- After using the toilet, coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or touching your face.
- After handling raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.
- After touching rubbish, pets, phones, mobility equipment or cleaning chemicals.
- After changing gloves; gloves do not replace handwashing.

If you are unwell

Do not prepare food for other people while you have vomiting or diarrhoea. Follow relevant workplace illness-exclusion procedures and obtain health advice. Cover cuts with waterproof dressings and suitable gloves.

HANDWASH: Wet → Soap → Rub all surfaces (20 seconds) → Rinse → Dry.

3 Cleaning versus sanitising

Cleaning removes visible dirt; sanitising reduces harmful microorganisms.

- Clean benches, boards and utensils with detergent and warm water. Rinse when required.
- Use a food-contact-safe sanitiser where needed, following label dilution and contact time.
- Keep cleaning chemicals in original labelled containers, away from food and medications.
- Use separate cloths for kitchen and bathroom; change dirty sponges and cloths frequently.
- Air-dry utensils where possible. Wash reusable tea towels frequently.
- Clean refrigerator handles, taps, switches and frequently touched surfaces.
- Wash produce under running water. Do not use soap or household disinfectant on food.

Never mix bleach with other cleaners, especially ammonia or acids.

4 Stop cross-contamination

Germs and allergens can move between foods, hands, boards, utensils and surfaces.

- Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Store raw meat sealed on the bottom shelf of the fridge so juices cannot drip onto other food.
- Use different clean boards and knives for raw foods and foods that will not be cooked.
- Never put cooked food back on a plate used for raw meat unless washed and sanitised.
- Do not wash raw chicken; splashing water can spread germs.
- Wash hands and clean equipment after raw-food preparation.
- Keep allergens separated and follow the individual allergy plan; cleaning must prevent allergen cross-contact.

EXAMPLE: Cut salad first on a clean board. Then prepare raw chicken on a separate board. Cook chicken thoroughly. Wash and sanitise equipment before the next task.

5 Shopping, labels and food dates

Food safety begins before food reaches the kitchen.

- Pick up chilled and frozen items last and take them home promptly. Use an insulated bag in hot weather.
- Check packages for damage, leaks, swollen cans, broken seals or signs of pests.
- Read allergen labels every time: recipes and product ingredients can change.
- “Use by” is a safety date: do not eat food after it. “Best before” mainly relates to quality; assess storage and condition.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions after opening; label containers with the opening date.
- Store dry goods in clean, sealed containers in a cool, dry cupboard.
- Use older stock first when still safe: first in, first out (FIFO).

6 Fridge and freezer storage

Cold storage slows bacterial growth; freezing does not reliably kill all germs.

Where	Safe practice
FRIDGE	Keep perishable food at 5°C or colder. Check with a fridge thermometer.
FREEZER	Aim for –18°C or colder. Keep food wrapped and labelled.
BOTTOM SHELF	Raw meat, poultry and seafood in leak-proof containers.
MIDDLE / TOP	Covered cooked food and ready-to-eat items, separate from raw foods.
DOOR	Less temperature-stable; avoid storing highly perishable foods there if possible.

Do not overload the fridge. Let air circulate. Keep doors closed and check seals. Label leftovers with the preparation date. When in doubt about time or temperature, discard the food.

7 Safe cooking temperatures

A food thermometer is more reliable than colour or appearance.

Food	What to do
Chicken, turkey and other poultry	Cook to at least 75°C in the centre.
Minced meat, burgers, sausages, rolled meat and offal	Cook to at least 75°C in the centre.
Whole cuts of meat	Follow appropriate safe preparation advice; whole steaks may be cooked to preference when suitable.
Fish, eggs and mixed dishes	Cook thoroughly; follow recipe and applicable food-safety guidance. Extra care is needed for vulnerable people.

- Insert a clean probe into the thickest part, avoiding bone or the pan.
- Check more than one spot for large or uneven pieces.
- Clean and sanitise the probe between foods.
- Never taste raw mince, cake batter containing raw egg, or uncooked poultry.

75°C IN THE CENTRE: A practical target for poultry, mince, sausages, rolled meat and offal under Australian guidance.

8 The 2-hour / 4-hour rule

For potentially hazardous food held between 5°C and 60°C, count all time out of temperature control.

TOTAL TIME in danger zone	Action
LESS THAN 2 HOURS	Use now or return to the fridge for later.
2 TO 4 HOURS	Use immediately; do not return to the fridge.
MORE THAN 4 HOURS	Throw it away.

The time is cumulative: add together time spent preparing, transporting, displaying and serving food. If you do not know how long food has been out, the safer choice is to discard it.

TEMPERATURE DANGER ZONE = 5°C TO 60°C. Keep cold food at 5°C or below and hot food at 60°C or above.

9 Cooling, leftovers and reheating

Leftovers are useful, but unsafe cooling and reheating can cause food poisoning.

Cool cooked food quickly

- Divide food into small portions and shallow, covered containers.
- For potentially hazardous food, cool from 60°C to 21°C within 2 hours, then to 5°C or colder within the next 4 hours.
- Do not leave a large pot of soup or rice on the bench to cool overnight.
- Refrigerate promptly. Record dates and use refrigerated leftovers within 2–3 days as a cautious household guide.

Reheat safely

- Reheat quickly until steaming hot throughout; 75°C is a useful cautious target for leftovers.
- Stir microwaved food, allow standing time and check the centre.
- Avoid reheating leftovers repeatedly. Reheat only the portion needed.
- Rice and pasta need particular care: chill promptly and reheat only once.

IMPORTANT: Reheating cannot always make badly stored food safe. Some toxins may remain even after heating.

10 Defrosting, microwaves and transport

Avoid allowing frozen food to warm slowly on the bench.

- Defrost in the fridge, in a covered container on a lower shelf.
- For microwave defrosting, cook the food immediately afterwards.
- Never defrost meat or seafood at room temperature.
- Cook frozen foods according to package directions and verify the centre is safely cooked.
- For microwave meals, stir or rotate where possible and allow standing time.
- Transport cold foods in an insulated cooler with ice bricks; keep hot food at 60°C or hotter if holding hot.
- At picnics and community events, minimise time out of refrigeration and use the 2-hour / 4-hour rule.

11 Allergies and special mealtime needs

Food safety includes preventing allergic reactions and following swallowing plans.

- Confirm allergies, intolerances, coeliac requirements and current healthcare instructions before cooking.
- Check ingredient and “may contain” labels and prevent cross-contact with clean equipment.
- Never assume that removing an allergen after cooking makes the meal safe.
- For people with swallowing difficulties, follow the exact texture and fluid level prescribed in their mealtime plan.
- Do not assume a blended, pureed or softened recipe meets an IDDSI level without appropriate testing.
- Check that food is not too hot to eat; offer assistance, suitable utensils and comfortable positioning as specified.
- If a person coughs, chokes, has a wet/gurgly voice or difficulty swallowing, stop and follow their mealtime/emergency plan; seek clinical advice.

The CCTS texture-modified cookbooks are educational aids, not a substitute for a speech pathologist’s assessment or a personalised mealtime management plan.

12 Food poisoning: signs and response

Food poisoning may cause vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach cramps, fever or dehydration.

- Stop serving suspected food. Do not taste it to check if it is safe.
- Keep the packaging, ingredient details and meal times if an illness is being investigated.
- Encourage appropriate fluids if safe for the person and consistent with their care plan.
- Seek prompt medical advice for older people, people with significant health conditions, dehydration, persistent vomiting or worsening symptoms.
- Call 000 for collapse, severe breathing difficulty, severe confusion, unresponsiveness or another life-threatening emergency.
- If food prepared as part of CCTS supports may have caused illness, notify management promptly and follow incident and reporting procedures.

For non-emergency health advice in Australia, contact a GP or healthdirect on 1800 022 222. For emergencies call 000.

13 Kitchen hazards and emergencies

Food hygiene is only one part of kitchen safety.

- Burns: keep handles turned in, use dry oven mitts, avoid steam, and keep hot liquids away from edges. Cool a minor thermal burn under cool running water for 20 minutes and seek advice as appropriate.
- Cuts: use a stable board and safe knife grip; for significant bleeding apply direct pressure and seek urgent help.
- Fire: never leave cooking unattended. If a fire starts, move away and call 000; do not put water on an oil fire.
- Electrical safety: keep cords and appliances away from water; stop using damaged equipment.
- Falls: wipe spills promptly, clear pathways and use non-slip footwear.
- Chemicals: store cleaning products away from food, never mix chemicals and follow labels.
- Power outage: keep fridge and freezer doors closed. If food safety cannot be confirmed after the outage, discard high-risk food.

14 Daily and weekly checklists

Print this page and use it as a routine prompt.

BEFORE COOKING

- ☐ Hands washed and dried
- ☐ Bench, boards and utensils clean
- ☐ Food in date; labels/allergens checked
- ☐ Fridge temperature 5°C or colder
- ☐ Raw foods separated from ready-to-eat food
- ☐ Mealtime plan and required assistance checked

AFTER COOKING

- ☐ Food cooked to a safe temperature
- ☐ Leftovers cooled and refrigerated promptly
- ☐ Containers labelled and dated
- ☐ Benches, utensils and sink cleaned
- ☐ Rubbish removed; floors dry
- ☐ Appliances turned off safely

WEEKLY CHECK

- ☐ Check fridge and freezer thermometers
- ☐ Check use-by dates and discard unsafe food
- ☐ Clean fridge shelves, handles and seals
- ☐ Replace dirty sponges/cloths
- ☐ Check pantry for pests and damaged packaging

15 Practice scenarios and printable logs

Use these examples to build confidence and discuss safe decisions.

Scenario A: Chicken left on the bench

Raw chicken has been out for an unknown time. Do not guess. Discard it if you cannot establish safe handling and temperature history.

Scenario B: Cooked rice saved for tomorrow

Divide into shallow portions, cool quickly, refrigerate promptly and reheat once until steaming hot.

Scenario C: Raw chicken board used for salad

Stop. Use a separate clean board and utensils for salad. Wash and sanitise contaminated surfaces.

Scenario D: A participant has a prescribed puree texture

Use their current mealtime plan. A picture or blender setting alone cannot prove the food is safe.

FRIDGE / FREEZER TEMPERATURE LOG

Date / time	Fridge °C / Freezer °C / Action
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

LEFTOVER LABEL TEMPLATE

Meal: _____ Prepared: _____
Refrigerated: _____ Use by: _____

16 Trusted Australian sources

This guide was prepared using publicly available Australian food-safety guidance.

- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) — Food safety basics: foodstandards.gov.au
- FSANZ — 2-hour / 4-hour rule: foodstandards.gov.au
- FSANZ — Cooling and reheating food: foodstandards.gov.au
- FSANZ — Keeping food at the right temperature: foodstandards.gov.au
- NSW Food Authority — Leftovers and home food safety: foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
- healthdirect Australia — Food safety: healthdirect.gov.au/food-safety

Important information

This handbook provides general education, not individual medical, dietetic or speech-pathology advice. It is not a food safety program or a substitute for training required by law. Follow the person's care and mealtime plans, manufacturer instructions, and applicable food safety standards. Review procedures for any CCTS food-service activity with an appropriately qualified food-safety professional.

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