



Food Safety for Food Handlers at Shelters

Taking Good Care of the Food You Prepare

As a food handler, you play an important role in providing safe and healthy food to shelter residents. Shelter residents are more likely to become ill than the normal population because they may have been without food, prescription medication, and sleep for several days. The last thing we all want is for the residents to be sick with vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps.

FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS TO PROVIDE SAFE FOOD

Practice Good Hygiene

- Wash your hands throughout the day with soap and water for 20 seconds. Rinse well and dry thoroughly with a paper towel.
- Do not handle any food with bare hands.
- Wear a cap, scarf, and/or hair net to completely cover the scalp and hair including ponytails.
- Wear a face mask while preparing or serving food.
- Do not eat or smoke in the food preparation area.
- If you are sick with vomiting, diarrhea, fever, sore throat with fever, have an open sore or infected cut on the hands, or are experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell, do not work, leave the area immediately, and notify your manager as soon as possible.

Use a Thermometer!

- Keep foods that must be refrigerated at 41°F or below until ready to serve.
- Keep hot foods at 135°F or greater.
- Cool hot foods quickly if not serving immediately using an ice bath and stirring often or place food in pans no more than two inches deep and refrigerate. **TAKE NOTE:**
 - Foods should be cooled from 135°F to 70°F in two hours and then from 70°F to 41°F in four hours.
 - Pans should not be stored one atop the other and lids should be off or ajar until the food is completely cooled.
- Cook hamburgers and other ground beef to 155°F; poultry to 165°F; whole pork, whole beef, seafood to 145°F.
- Reheat precooked food to 165°F within 2 hours. Do not heat foods in crock pots, steam tables or other hot holding devices, or over sterno.

Avoid Contamination

- Store all food at least six inches off the floor.

- Separate raw and cooked foods.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize equipment and food-contact surfaces when switching from preparing raw to ready-to-eat food.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize food equipment and utensils in a 3-compartment sink or a dish machine using an approved sanitizer (chlorine, quaternary ammonium compound, or iodine). Follow your supervisor's instructions for sanitizing. Table 1 is an example of sanitization using chlorine bleach.
- Clean dining room tables before and after each meal and then sanitize with a wiping cloth.
- Rinse and store wiping cloths in a bucket of sanitizer (for example: 1 capful of bleach in 2 gallons)
- Change the wiping cloth solution and the wiping cloths every hour or use pre-moistened sanitizing wipes.
- In the extreme circumstance a food contact or table surface is potentially contaminated with the COVID-19 virus, wash, rinse, disinfect, rinse again thoroughly, and then sanitize. Table 2 is an example of **disinfection** using chlorine bleach). Discuss need for disinfection with supervisor first.
- Ensure cleaning or disinfectant residues are not left on food contact or table surfaces as they can cause allergic reactions or cause someone to ingest the chemicals.**

Table 1

Bleach Guidance (5-6% Sodium Hypochlorite) for Routine Sanitization of Food-Contact Surfaces

Wash with hot, soapy water and rinse before sanitizing

Sanitize	50-100 ppm	1 tbsp bleach/1 gallon water	10 seconds	Air dry
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Table 2

Bleach Guidance (5-6% Sodium Hypochlorite) for Disinfecting Food-Contact Surfaces Potentially Contaminated with COVID-19*

Wash with hot, soapy water and rinse before disinfecting

Purpose	PPM	Dilution	Contact Time	Next Step
Disinfect	1000 ppm	1/3 cup bleach/1 gallon water	1 minute	Wash, rinse thoroughly, then sanitize
Sanitize	50-100 ppm	1 tbsp bleach/1 gallon water	10 seconds	Air dry

*Other [EPA-registered disinfectants for COVID-19](#) acceptable for food-contact surfaces may be used.

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