



# Is Your Kitchen Making You Sick?

## CLEAN UP YOUR ACT

With summer finally here and hot days and balmy evenings approaching us, correct food safety is paramount. Food poisoning bacteria, commonly pathogenic micro organisms, begin their 'sickening' journey to you in a number of ways. The bacteria can be present in the food brought into the house or may exist on the hands of those who are preparing and eating the food. The bacteria can also be present on the work surfaces of the kitchen and any equipment used in food handling. Naturally, any pests that enter the kitchen and tread over storage areas or work surfaces can also bring the bacteria.

Bacteria are living organisms; therefore they need food, water and the correct environment to multiply. In fact, the Salmonella bacterium is only one of the species of such bacteria; however the bacteria need to be present in large quantities, to cause food poisoning. High risk foods, such as moist animal foods for example milk, cream, eggs, meat, fish and poultry; and cooked moist rice and pasta, are favourite playgrounds for food poisoning bacteria. The Bacillus Cereus, one specific food poisoning bacteria, enjoys growing on starchy foods.

## DANGER ZONES

The temperature danger zone, 5°C to 60°C, is an essential fact for all men to know. Food poisoning bacteria can multiply very quickly on a high risk food item in this temperature zone, although most bacterium are happy growing in the middle of the temperature range at approximately 20°C to 40°C. Disturbingly, 1 bacterium can multiple to more than 16 million in 8 hours.

Unfortunately, pathogenic bacteria can be transferred, via cross contamination, to other people, work surfaces, sinks, tea towels and dish cloths, cooking equipment and eating utensils and naturally to the food being prepared and then consumed. It must be noted that you are not trying to exterminate all micro organisms, that would be impossible as they surround us and are necessary and useful to our lives. You should focus on reducing the pathogenic bacteria that cause the illness and disease.

## SIX FOOD SAFETY RULES

Six ways to reduce the risk of food poisoning are listed in the following food safety rules:

1. Food must be purchased from reputable, clean and fresh smelling shops.
2. Store your food correctly. Fresh foods and high risk foods must be kept out of the temperature danger zones. Ensure your fridge is working properly and the temperature inside is no greater than 5°C.
3. Wash your hands. Washing hands before, during and after food preparation reduces cross contamination. Correct hand washing must be taught to each member of the household. This means using warm water and soap, and importantly drying hands **completely** afterwards. Surprising to many, having wet hands helps you to pick up bacteria and transfer it to items and people, in fact, 10 times quicker than dry hands.
4. Pet food and human food must be kept separate. This includes the equipment used in handling such foods. Have individual and clearly marked pet food storage containers, bowls and utensils. Additionally, wash pet items separately from human items, washing your hands thoroughly before touching your own food.
5. Food preparation tools should be well cared for. This includes washing them, rinsing them with hot water before leaving them stacked to air dry. Air drying is more hygienic than using damp tea towels which are one of the worst breeding grounds for pathogenic bacteria. Dish cloths and sponges left on the side of sinks and stored in cupboards encourage bacterial growth. Try to dry cloths after use and ensure they are laundered regularly. Using a dishwasher to wash and rinse items used for food preparation is beneficial, however you must keep them clean and aired.
6. Keep kitchen work surfaces clean and tidy. Food and crumbs should not be left around at night as it invites pests to enter and feast.

*To improve your kitchen's hygiene and save \$\$\$, see the FURI knife block and colour coded chopping boards on p12.*



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*William Angliss Institute of TAFE strives to provide specialist education, training and associated services to the Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts Industries.*

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