



WHO DONE IT?

A Look at Food Safety Villains

It happened yesterday around noon. Innocent children were enjoying their lunch, but that was just the beginning. The symptoms were not seen until later—upset stomach, nausea, even vomiting. Looks like another case of food poisoning, but what is to blame?

The Kitchen Towel?

Can such a harmless kitchen essential be suspect in cross contamination?

According to research done by USDA and Kansas State University*, towels are the number one source of cross contamination in the kitchen.

Of course, hand washing is an important first step to keep bacteria from spreading around your kitchen, but if you don't properly wash and then dry your hands with the towel, harmful bacteria will be spread to the towel. Anything that comes in contact with the towel after that will be contaminated.

Kitchen towels collect bacteria over multiple uses and should be changed and washed frequently.

Paper towels should be used only once and then thrown away to avoid bacteria from spreading to other surfaces.



The Refrigerator?

Isn't the refrigerator where we put food to keep it safe? Although the fridge is usually an ally, don't let it deceive you.

Temperature

Food stored at improper temperatures can cause bacteria to grow. Make sure your refrigerator is set at or below 40° F. Your freezer should be kept at or below 0° F.

Organization

Keep meat, poultry, and seafood in sealed containers or bags on bottom shelves so juices don't drip onto other foods. Also, store these foods in a location separate from fruits and vegetables. Store perishable food items in the back of the refrigerator where it is colder instead of the door where the temperature can fluctuate.

Cleaning

Regularly clean out your refrigerator to help avoid any possible cross contamination and to keep you from eating expired or spoiled foods.

The Leftovers?

Leftovers may be your best friend, but watch out, they can also be deceptively dangerous.

Follow some of these steps to keep your leftovers safe:

- ◆ **Cool quickly in shallow containers**—this will help the food reach proper temperatures (less than 40° F) faster and limit bacterial growth.
- ◆ **Refrigerate within two hours**—bacteria grows best at warm temperatures, so quickly store leftovers in the refrigerator to keep harmful bacteria from spreading.
- ◆ **Reheat properly**—food should be reheated to 165° F. The microwave can be a great tool to quickly reheat leftovers, but often it doesn't heat evenly. Try stirring the food throughout cooking, allow to set for a few minutes after cooking to evenly distribute the heat to cooler parts, and check the temperature with a thermometer.



The Cookie Dough?

Although innocent and delicious looking, cookie dough, cake batters, and other uncooked sweet treats can cause foodborne illness. These sweet concoctions contain uncooked eggs which may be contaminated with Salmonella. The only way to make raw eggs safe is by cooking them to 160° F.

Who Done It?

So, which one of these villains caused the food poisoning yesterday? You decide. Are any of these food safety villains a problem in your kitchen? If so, make changes and take precautions necessary to avoid food poisoning and the sickness it brings.

Remember to wash your hands frequently, store and handle foods properly, and cook foods to correct temperatures. Following the tips from this handout will help you have healthy, happy children at your child care.



Food Safety Resources

www.foodsafety.gov

www.cdc.gov/foodsafety

*Towel study: www.foodprotection.org/files/food-protection-trends/JAN-FEB-15-sneed.pdf

<http://blogs.usda.gov/category/food-safety/>

www.homefoodsafety.org

Check out the FoodKeeper app for food safety help on cooking temperatures, storage timelines, and any other food safety questions on their 24/7 hotline. Available for Android and Apple devices.

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Association for Child Development

www.acdkids.org

Illinois Office

4415 W Harrison St, Suite 535 • Hillside, IL 60162
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