

Involving children in the preparation and cooking of foods gives them a chance to: learn about ingredients; understand cooking processes, explore their skills; and build confidence in the kitchen. However, it is very important to follow proper food safety and hygiene practices to ensure the food your child eats is safe. Food poisoning can easily cause children to become dehydrated and very unwell.

### Here are some tips on how to prepare food safely:

- Always wash hands before handling food, and again during the preparation of food if items which may carry bacteria are touched – and make sure children do the same
- When buying food, make sure packages are unbroken and products are within the use-by date
- Keep your kitchen clean; and store your food in sealed containers once their packages are open
- Use separate boards and knives for cutting raw meat and fish, cooked items such as meat and vegetables, and fruit
- Keep high-risk foods (such as milk, meat, fish and cooked rice) refrigerated before cooking, or until they are ready to be eaten. Place any cooked high-risk foods back in the refrigerator if they are not being eaten straight away
- Do not reheat cooked food more than once
- Reheat food that has been in the fridge to steaming hot, allow it to cool slightly then serve immediately

### Teach your child how important it is to always wash their hands:

- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- After blowing their nose
- After playing with a pet

### Correct handwashing procedure:

- Wet hands with warm water
- Add soap onto hands and rub well for 15–20 seconds (or longer if desired)
- Continue to rub hands together quickly across all surfaces of hands and wrists
- Don't forget to wash the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and underneath fingernails
- Rinse hands under running water making sure all the soap is gone
- Pat hands dry using paper towels (or clean hand towels)
- As a guide – the time taken to wash hands should take as long as it takes to sing the 'Happy Birthday' song



### For more information, check out our other food safety fact sheets:

- Food safety at home
- Preventing the growth of bacteria in food
- How to be 'food safe' when buying foods
- Keeping lunch safe at school