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| <p>Team Name: Nutrition and Food Services</p> <p>Team Lead: Regional Manager Nutrition and Food Services</p> <p>Approved by: Regional Lead – Corporate Services &amp; Chief Financial Officer</p> | <p>Reference Number: ORG.1912.PL.003</p> <p>Program Area: Support Services</p> <p>Policy Section: Nutrition and Food Services</p> |
| <p>Issue Date: April 21, 2015</p> <p>Review Date: June 4, 2020</p> <p>Revision Date: March 8, 2021</p>  | <p>Subject: Food Handling and Preparation</p>   |

*Use of pre-printed documents: Users are to refer to the electronic version of this document located on the Southern Health-Santé Sud Health Provider Site to ensure the most current document is consulted.*

**POLICY SUBJECT:**

Food Handling and Preparation

**PURPOSE:**

To demonstrate the appropriate techniques for thawing, cooking, holding, cooling, freezing and reheating of food items.

**BOARD POLICY REFERENCE:**

Executive Limitation (EL-2) Treatment of Clients  
 Executive Limitation (EL-3) Treatment of Staff

**POLICY:**

Southern Health-Santé Sud ensures that all Food Services Operators will follow established standards of Safe Food Handling.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Potentially Hazardous Food** – Food (in whole or part) that consists of milk or milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish (edible mollusk and crustacean), or any other ingredients that is capable of supporting the growth of infectious microbes and/or their toxins. This does not include foods, which have a pH level of 4.6 or below, and foods, which have a water activity of 0.85 or less.

**Danger Zone** – Bacteria or small microbes that grow rapidly over the temperature range between 4°C-60°C (40°F-140°F).

**Cross Contamination** – Occurs when pathogens (microbes or their toxins) from a contaminated source come in contact with something else, e.g., food, people, work surfaces, eating, cooking or serving.

**Client** – Any individual that is the recipient of health care services. Client is used interchangeably with resident (in personal care homes) and patient (in acute care or transitional care centres).

**IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

- People who bring food in from outside the facility for residents/patients will follow the guidelines provided in ORG.1912.PL.003.SD.01 Bringing in Food from Home.
- All programs with food related activities and any non-food service employee handling or storing food supplies, will reference ORG.1912.PL.003.SD.01 Bringing in Food from Home and ORG.1912.PR.01 Routine Practices – Handling Meal Trays.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Ensure food preparation is completed quickly and efficiently to decrease time in the temperature danger zone.
2. Prepare foods to decrease the potential of cross contamination.
3. Raw foods should be prepared separately from cooked foods.

**Thawing – 3 Acceptable Methods**

- Thaw frozen food **in the refrigerator** (preferred method) by storing the raw, potentially hazardous foods on bottom racks and away from other cooked/prepared foods.
- Wrap frozen food items in leak proof, water proof packaging. Submerge the food in cold tap water, changing it every 30 minutes.
- Use small quantities of food when thawing **in a microwave oven**.
- **DO NOT thaw food at room temperature.**
- **Cook from frozen** in small quantities if needed.

**Cooking**

- Potentially hazardous foods must be cooked to ensure all parts of the food reach the correct temperature and for the correct length of time to kill all pathogens.
- All food must reach a minimal temperature of 74°C (165°F) except for poultry which must reach 85°C (185°F) for 15 seconds.
- Microwave cooking requires all items be rotated or stirred during cooking then covered and allowed to sit for 2 minutes after cooking. Food temperatures must be taken at multiple sites when removed from the microwave oven.

**Holding**

- Hot food items must be held at a minimum of 60°C (140°F) for no longer than 2 hours before serving.
- Cold food items must be held at 4°C (40°F) or lower.
- Never mix new foods with old food or raw food with cooked food.
- Any potentially hazardous food items held at room temperature for more than 2 hours must be discarded.

## **Cooling**

- Cool all cooked food as quickly as possible.
- Potentially hazardous food should be cooled to 4°C (40°F) or below within 4 hours.
- Chill in small portions, put food on ice or refrigerate and freeze. If needed, transfer large quantities of cooked foods into shallow metal pans and stir frequently for quick cooling in the refrigerator.

## **Transportation**

- Hot foods must be transported so the food is maintained at or above 60°C.
- Refrigerated foods must be transported so the food is maintained at or below 4°C.
- Meal Trays delivered to units must be distributed to clients immediately to ensure food safety and to prevent foodborne illness. If this is not possible, refrigerate the tray and reheat the food. This will ensure safe food temperatures are maintained (4°C for cold foods and 60°C for hot foods).

## **Storage of Cooked Product and Leftovers**

- Every container must be covered tightly and labelled with the date and its contents.
- Refrigerated foods should be maintained at 4°C (40°F) or lower and stored for a maximum of 3 days (72 hours) or 2 days (48 hours) for mayonnaise based food items that have never been frozen.
- Stored frozen foods should be maintained frozen at a minimum temperature of -18°C (0°F) and used within 2 to 3 months.

## **Reheating**

- Always reheat rapidly to the highest possible temperature, over 74°C (165°F).
- Holding oven, steam table, and soup urns should never be used to reheat.
- After reheating, food items should be served immediately and then discarded.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:**

[ORG.1912.PL.003.SD.01](#) - Bringing in Food from Home

## **REFERENCES:**

ORG.1912.PR.01 Routine Practices – Handling Meal Trays

Food Safety Code of Practice for Canada's Food Service Industry - Canadian Restaurant and Food Service Association, 2009 Edition.

FOODSAFE Level 1 Student Workbook – British Columbia FOODSAFE Secretariat, 6th Edition, 2016.