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UC FOOD SAFETY CE UPDATE

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**Placer County
Cooperative Extension Office**
11477 E Avenue
DeWitt Center
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 889-7350

**Nevada County
Cooperative Extension Office**
255 So. Auburn Street
Veteran's Memorial Hall
Grass Valley, CA 95945
(530) 273-4563

Website:
[http://
ceplacernevada.ucanr.edu](http://ceplacernevada.ucanr.edu)

**For more information,
contact:**
Rosemary Carter,
UC CalFresh Program Mgr.
(530) 889-7350

Email:
carter@ucanr.edu

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Kids and Food Safety

It is estimated that roughly seven million American children are “on their own” or are “cared for by a sibling” before and after school.

With both parents working outside the home, the responsibility of making breakfast, packing lunch, or preparing an after school snack can often fall on the child. Therefore,

it is important that they know and understand basic kitchen and food safety practices.

If your children will be on their own, even for short periods of time, the following information will help to ensure their safety.

Keep a copy of these guidelines in a spot that is easy for children to read.



Guidelines for Keeping Kids Safe

1. Put backpacks on the floor, not on the counter or kitchen table where germs can be transferred.
2. Clean out lunch boxes and throw away “refrigerator type” foods, such as sandwiches, yogurt, or cheese sticks, left over from lunch.
3. Wash your hands with warm water and soap before you make and eat a snack. Hands carry lots of germs.
4. Wash fruits and vegetables under cold running water before eating.
5. Do not eat bread, cheese, or soft fruits or vegetables that are bruised or have spots of mold.
6. Don't leave cold foods like milk, lunchmeat, hard cooked eggs, or yogurt on the counter for more than 2 hours. Put them back in the refrigerator as soon as you've made your snack.
7. Don't eat unbaked cookie dough because it may contain raw eggs.
8. Don't eat any perishable foods (foods that are kept in the refrigerator) if they have been left out for more than two hours. This includes pizza.

Microwave Safety Tips for Children

In order to safely use a microwave oven, children must be able to read and understand directions. **Go over these important tips for using a microwave:**

- ➔ Cover a dish of food for microwaving with a lid or plastic wrap and wrap loose to let steam escape. The moist heat will help destroy harmful bacteria.
- ➔ Do not use plastic containers, such as margarine tubs or other one-time use containers in the microwave. They can warp or melt, possibly causing harmful chemicals to get in the food.
- ➔ Do not use metal or aluminum foil containers in the microwave. They can get too hot and burn. In some instances, this can cause sparks or even flames. Use only glass and other containers labeled “made for microwave use.”
- ➔ Foods and liquids heat unevenly in the microwave, so stir or rotate food midway through cooking. If you don’t, you’ll have cold spots where harmful bacteria can survive.
- ➔ To prevent burns, carefully remove food from the microwave oven. Use potholders and uncover foods away from your face, so steam can escape.
- ➔ Reheat hot dogs until they are hot and steaming. Pierce hot dogs with a fork before putting them into the microwave oven to keep them from exploding.
- ➔ Throw away leftovers (and perishable food) that stays out longer than two hours—or one hour if it’s over 90°F. When in doubt, throw it out!

Children can learn to use a food thermometer to check for safety and doneness.

Why Are Children at Risk?



Everyone is at risk for foodborne illness – an illness that comes from eating contaminated food. However, some people, such as young children, are at greater risk for

experiencing a more serious illness or even death should they get a foodborne illness. This is because a child’s immune system (the body’s defense to detect and destroy pathogens) is not as developed as an adult’s.

Symptoms of food poisoning may occur within minutes to weeks after consuming contaminated food and often present themselves as flu-like symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever. Because the symptoms are often flu-like, many people may not recognize that the illness is caused by harmful bacteria or other pathogens in food. Some microorganisms, such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Clostridium botulinum*, cause far more serious symptoms than vomiting and diarrhea.