

Hygienic food preparation and handling in food businesses

Don't let your food turn nasty!

Food poisoning is a serious health problem. It can cause severe illness and even death.

Food poisoning can seriously damage the reputation of a business, damage the reputation of the food industry and damage the jobs of many workers.

As a person who handles food—whether you are a kitchen hand, a food process worker, a shop assistant or a waiter—you have an important responsibility to handle food safely. So:

- protect other people from getting sick.
- protect your reputation in the food industry.
- protect your business.
- protect your job.

Victorian and Australian food safety laws are designed to ensure that food that is sold is safe to eat and free of any contamination.

All Victorian businesses and organisations that make, display, transport or prepares food for sale must be registered with a local Council or in some cases with PrimeSafe or Dairy Food Safety Victoria. Except for specific exemptions, every business must also comply with Victorian food laws including having a Food Safety Program and having a Food Safety Supervisor.

Prevent food poisoning by practicing hygienic food preparation and handling:

- ☑ Keep raw foods and ready-to-eat foods separate to avoid cross-contamination.
- ☑ If possible, use separate and clean utensils and cutting boards for raw foods and ready-to-eat foods, or wash and sanitise utensils and cutting boards between uses.
- ☑ Thoroughly clean, sanitise and dry cutting boards, knives, pans, plates, containers and other utensils after using them.
- ☑ Thoroughly rinse all fruit and vegetables in clean water, to remove soil, bacteria, insects and chemicals.
- ☑ Make sure food is thoroughly cooked and the centre of the cooked food has reached 75°C.
- ☑ Avoid keeping high-risk food in the Temperature Danger Zone. Keep chilled foods cold at 5°C or colder, and hot food hot at 60°C or hotter.
- ☑ Avoid leaving just cooked food out to cool for more than one hour. Once it has cooled, immediately place food in the refrigerator.
- ☑ Keep frozen food out of the Temperature Danger Zone while thawing.
- ☑ Take extra care when preparing foods where eggs remain uncooked such as egg-nog and home-made mayonnaise as bacteria on the egg shell can contaminate the food.
- ☑ Follow the business Food Safety Program.
- ☑ Follow the advice given by the Food Safety Supervisor.
- ☑ Be trained in safe food handling and preparation.

Cross-contamination

Raw food can contain bacteria which causes food poisoning.

Cooked or ready-to-eat food in contact with raw food can be contaminated by bacteria from the raw food. This is called cross contamination.

It's very important to keep raw food separate from cooked and ready-to-eat food.

Don't use the same knives, chopping boards or other equipment for raw food and cooked or ready-to-eat food. Thoroughly wash and sanitise equipment after each use.

Handling food

Everyone has bacteria on their bodies. Even healthy people can spread bacteria onto food by touching it with their hands.

Thoroughly wash and dry hands before handling food and between handling raw food and cooked or ready-to-eat food.

Use clean and sanitised utensils (tongs, spoons, spatulas) to handle cooked or ready-to-eat food.

Gloves

Disposable gloves can be used, the same precautions should be taken when handling raw food and cooked or ready-to-eat food.

Wash and dry hands thoroughly before putting on gloves, and always use fresh gloves.

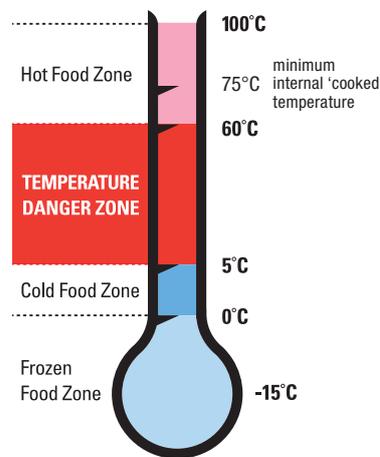
Change gloves:

- least once every hour.
- if they become contaminated.
- if they tear.
- when switching between raw and ready-to-eat food
- when changing jobs.
- after taking rubbish out.
- after sweeping, mopping and cleaning.

Cooking and heating food

Bacteria grow quickly in high-risk foods when kept at a temperature between 5°C and 60°C. This is called the Temperature Danger Zone.

It is very important not to keep high-risk food in the Temperature Danger Zone longer than is absolutely necessary.



Cooking food to over 75°C kills most of the bacteria. Make sure food is thoroughly cooked and the centre of the cooked food has reached 75°C.

Cooling food

Food just cooked should not be left out to cool for more than one hour. Once it has cooled, the food should be immediately placed in the refrigerator or freezer.

Large portions of food cool faster if divided into smaller pieces.

Keep frozen food frozen solid.

Thawing frozen food

Bacteria can grow in frozen food while it is thawing, so keep frozen food out of the Temperature Danger Zone.

Thaw frozen food on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator, and keep it in the fridge until it is ready to be cooked.

If using a microwave oven to thaw food, cook the food immediately after defrosting.

Thaw food thoroughly before cooking. If you have to cook food that is still frozen, make sure that the food is cooked right through, and that its core temperature reaches 75°C.

Avoid re-freezing thawed food. Bacteria do not die when food is refrozen and are still there when the food is thawed again.

Packing and serving prepared food

Store food in clean, non-toxic, food storage containers strong enough for the job.

Wash and sanitise containers before using them.

Do not re-use containers that are only meant to be used once.

When serving food, make sure that all cutlery and crockery is clean and undamaged.

More information

The Department of Human Services Food Safety Unit has a range of resources on safe food handling available from the website www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety or by contacting 1300 364 352.

Local councils can also provide advice about safe food handling.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand also has a range of resources on food handling standards on the website www.foodstandards.gov.au