



FOOD SAFETY UPDATE

Kids in the Kitchen

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These days it is quite common for school age children to take an active role in preparing food for themselves or other family members. Whether it's making macaroni and cheese or heating up a frozen burrito, it is important for both children and



parents to be aware of food safety issues. Before letting kids hone their culinary skills, it's a good idea to plan a "food safety workshop" to show them some basic tips. The USDA has developed a quiz for parents and kids to take together. Try it with your children.

Kids Food Safety Quiz: True or False

- Put backpacks on the floor, not on the counter.
- Washing your hands with warm water and soap washes bacteria down the drain.
- You need to wash fruits and vegetables under cold running water before eating.
- Cooked foods should not be put on the same plate that held raw meat or poultry (unless the plate has been thoroughly washed).
- Lunch meat or deli meat does not need to be refrigerated after the package is opened.
- Don't leave leftovers on the counter for more than 2 hours.
- Always wash your hands after touching raw meat or poultry.
- Eating homemade cookie dough is not safe because it may contain raw eggs.



Answers on page 2!

Kids in the Kitchen *(continued)*

Children must be old enough to understand the science behind these kitchen warnings. For example, learning how bacteria grow and cause foodborne illness can help them understand **why** food needs to be put back in the refrigerator as soon as possible. All foods contain some bacteria and the amount doubles every 20 minutes. To demonstrate how quickly bacteria multiply try this:

- You will need 7 snack-size zip lock bags and a bag of dried beans. The beans represent bacteria on food.
- Label each bag with the information in the chart and explain that food on the counter that started out with only 5 bacteria will, after 2 hours, contain 320 bacteria.

Bag	Number of Bacteria (beans)	Length of time food is sitting out
1	5	Start time
2	10	20 minutes
3	20	40 minutes
4	40	1 hour
5	80	1 hr 20 min
6	160	1 hr 40min
7	320	2 hours

Additionally, children can learn to use a food thermometer to check for safety and doneness. 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:**

Answers to quiz: 1,2,3,4—true; 5—false; 6,7,8, - true

Microwave Safety Tips for Children

- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ 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.
- ⇒ To prevent burns, carefully remove food from the microwave oven. Use potholders and uncover foods away from your face, so steam can escape.
- ⇒ 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."
- ⇒ 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!

