

# Food Safety Fact Sheet

## Preventing Cross Contamination During Food Storage

### INTRODUCTION

Cross contamination is the transfer of bacteria or viruses from hands to food, food to food, or equipment or food contact surfaces to food. School nutrition employees can minimize or eliminate cross contamination by following the standard operating procedures in their food safety program.

### HERE ARE THE FACTS

One of the most common causes of foodborne illness is cross contamination. Cross contamination may occur when a sick employee handles food, raw food contaminates a ready-to-eat food, food contact surfaces that are not cleaned and sanitized properly come in contact with a ready-to-eat food, or equipment is used for multiple foods without cleaning and sanitizing between preparing foods. Proper food storage also is important in preventing contamination.

### APPLICATION

There are many practices in the standard operating procedures that school nutrition employees can follow to minimize or eliminate cross contamination during food storage.

#### Hand-to-Food Cross Contamination

- Wash hands properly, frequently, and at appropriate times.

#### Food-to-Food Cross Contamination

- Separate raw animal foods such as eggs, fish, meat, and poultry from ready-to-eat foods such as lettuce, cut melons, and lunch meats during storage.
- Separate different types of raw animal foods such as eggs, fish, meat, and poultry from each other except when combined in recipes.
- Store raw animal foods in refrigerators or walk-in coolers by placing the raw animal foods on shelves in the following order of cooking temperature: whole beef or pork on top shelf, raw ground meats on middle shelf, and poultry on bottom shelf.
- Separate unwashed fruits and vegetables from washed fruits and vegetables and other ready-to-eat foods.
- Place food in covered containers or packages except during cooling and store in the refrigerator or cooler.
- Designate an upper shelf of a refrigerator or walk-in cooler as a “cooling” shelf. Uncover containers of food during the initial quick cool-down phase to facilitate cooling.
- Store damaged goods in a separate location.





## Preventing Cross Contamination During Food Storage cont.

### Equipment and Food Contact Surface-to-Food Cross Contamination

- Use only dry, cleaned, and sanitized containers for food storage.
- Clean and sanitize shelves in the storage unit on a routine basis.
- Cover all foods well and label and date them.

**Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.**

### References

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, & Institute of Child Nutrition. (2016). *HACCP-based standard operating procedures: Preventing cross contamination during storage and preparation*. Retrieved from <http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/retailfoodprotection/foodcode/ucm374275.htm>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, & Institute of Child Nutrition. (2015). *Food safety in schools*. University, MS. Author.

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