

Careful Cutting: Knife Safety Tips

In a child nutrition operation, potential dangers are hidden around every corner. One of the greatest sources of accidents is one of the most commonly used pieces of small equipment – knives. To assure the safest work environment possible, it is essential to follow basic rules for the proper use and care of all equipment used in the operation. There is a variety of knives in the kitchen, and they are used for cutting all types of food. Following the basic guidelines for using knives can help to insure safety in the work environment:

- Concentrate on what you're doing when using a knife. Do not engage in conversation when using knives; pay attention to the task underway.
- Always use a cutting board. Use color-coded plastic or glass cutting boards for different types of food. Avoid using wooden cutting boards because they can retain harmful bacteria.
- Always use sharp knives. Dull blades cause more accidents because they are harder to work with and require more pressure. Sharp knives do not slip as easily and cut easier.
- Choose the correct size knife and appropriate blade for the job. Using a small knife for a task that requires a chef's knife can be dangerous. Using the correct knife can be more efficient.
- Do not hold food in your hand while you cut it. Always cut on the cutting board. Always keep fingers on top of the blade in case it slips.
- Keep knife handles free of grease or other slippery substances. Clean knives are safer to use and help prevent cross-contamination.
- Keep knives away from the edge of the counter to lessen the chance of being knocked off. Step out of the way if a knife is dropped. Never try to catch a falling knife or blade.
- Use knives for their intended purpose. Do not use knives as can openers, screwdrivers, staple removers, or box cutters.
- Wash knives immediately after use. Do not leave knives in a sink of soapy water where they cannot be seen. Keep the sharp edge of the knife away from you when washing.
- Store knives in a knife rack or knife drawer when not in use. Do not store knives with other small objects or leave them lying around.

Careful Cutting: Knife Safety Tips, continued

Quick Tip: Use a knife, a cutting board, and food items to demonstrate the proper cutting techniques. Emphasize these tips:

- Carry a knife by the handle with the tip down and the blade turned away from your body.
- Place a damp cloth under the cutting board to prevent it from sliding.
- Keep the point of the knife on the cutting board while you chop.
- Cut downward and away from your body.
- Use your free hand to firmly hold the food item against the cutting board, making sure fingers are out of the way of any slips that might occur.

Reference:

National Food Service Management Institute. (2008). *Growing your professional skills: Competencies, knowledge, and skills for successful school nutrition assistants*. University, MS: Author.

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer.

For more information and the nondiscrimination statement in other languages:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:
Institute of Child Nutrition. (2023). *Careful cutting: Knife safety tips*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The university cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images. Please contact helpdesk@theicn.org for more information.

© 2023, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences

