

West Virginia WIC's "Learning for Health" Project

Lesson #6

Food - Make it SAFE!

Focus is on safe food handling, storage, preparation for the whole family and avoiding choking hazards for young children.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, parents/caregivers will be able to:

1. Identify at least one consequence of unsafe food handling, storage and preparation.
2. Share one concern/experience with choking and/or illness related to unsafe food handling.
3. Participate in discussion on ideas for safe food handling and/or limiting risk of choking.
4. Choose at least one thing they will do differently to improve food safety in their home.

Materials

- Lesson Plan Posters (2)
- Copies of Parent Fact Sheet (1 two-sided sheet)
- Easel, flip chart and colorful markers
- Supplies for one activity.
- Pencils and/or pens for adults to write if they wish.

Preparation

- Set up room in an informal way - chairs in a semi-circle if possible.
- Hang up the posters so all the group participants can see them easily OR you can attached the posters to an easel and show them at the appropriate time.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and welcome everyone.
- Explain the purpose of the group and the estimated time.
- Have group members share their name and ask if anyone has ever experienced food poisoning. You can list the common symptoms on the flip chart.

Discussion Questions

Select your questions from the following list. Depending on the size of your group, you might plan to ask 2-3 questions to engage the group members and foster discussion.

Okay, we've talked a bit about what happens to you when you get food poisoning. Food-borne illness or food poisoning can make you sick and can be serious for young children. If you eat food that has bacteria, it can give you and your children headaches, vomiting and diarrhea. No one wants to be sick!

What causes food poisoning?

List causes from discussion on flip chart. Discussion might include:

- Not washing your hands
- Workers in restaurants not washing their hands
- Not putting food in the refrigerator
- Eating food that has "gone bad"
- Not washing off fruits and vegetables
- Using a cutting board or knife for raw meat then using them with other foods
- Eating "pink" meat or undercooked meat
- Eating raw eggs
- Thawing frozen foods on the counter
- Others.....

Great! You have shared some very specific things that cause food poisoning. If we look at this list, we can see that there are really 3 "areas" of food safety:

1. Keeping everything clean (have members point out a couple of examples from their list)
2. Preparing foods properly (have members point out a couple of examples from their list)
3. Store foods safely (have members point out a couple of examples from their list)

Let's talk about keeping everything clean first. What are some of the basic things you can do to keep things clean?

Seek ideas from members and write down key words on flip chart. You can use the following list to prompt discussion:

Keep everything clean

- Wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing or eating food and after anything that interrupts either of those activities.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables carefully before cooking them or giving them to your child to eat raw.
- Wash dishes thoroughly in hot soapy water. Use a clean dishcloth to wash dishes. Don't use sponges - they often spread germs. Rinse and sanitize dishes and let them air-dry.
- If you use a cutting board, wash it thoroughly with hot soapy water between uses for different foods, especially after using it to cut raw meat. Use only cutting boards made of nonporous materials.

Okay, now let's think about food preparation. What are some of the basic things you can do to keep foods safe during preparation?

Seek ideas from members and write down key words on flip chart. You can use the following list to prompt discussion:

Prepare foods properly

- Always cook foods thoroughly. Be especially careful about foods containing meat, fish, eggs, or poultry. Cook hamburger until it is brown or gray on the inside. Cook chicken until the juices are clear when a knife or fork is stuck into it. Cook fish until it is opaque and flakes easily with a fork. Cook eggs until they are firm.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or under cold running water - NEVER on the counter or in a bowl of standing water.
- Serve hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Make sure that hot foods stay above 140 degrees F and cold foods stay below 40 degrees F. Using a food thermometer is a quick and inexpensive way to test the temperature of foods.

What about some basic tips for storing foods?

Seek ideas from members and write down key words on flip chart. You can use the following list to prompt discussion:

Store foods safely

- If you have stored cooked foods in the refrigerator, serve them within 24 hours.
- Store raw foods below cooked or ready-to-eat foods in the refrigerator.
- Store dry ingredients (rice, sugar, etc.) in nonporous containers with tight-fitting lids to prevent insects and rodents from entering the product.
- Cover and refrigerate or freeze extra cooked foods right away. NEVER leave it on a counter to cool.

- Leftovers that are refrigerated or frozen should only be reheated or reused one time. If they are not all eaten the second time, throw them out.
- When reheating, bring liquids such as gravy, soup, or sauces to a boil. Heat other leftovers to 165 degrees F.
- Store cleaning products and medications away from food and out of the reach of children.

So, you've got this container of leftovers that's been in your fridge for a few days and you are wondering whether you should eat it. How can you tell if it's safe to eat?

How to tell if food is safe...

- Look at the expiration date on unopened containers of food. Do not use food past this date - even if it looks okay.
- Inspect food for spoilage every day. How does it smell? How does it look? If a food smells spoiled or looks moldy, don't serve it to children, and don't eat it yourself. If food is moldy, throw it out - don't just take out the moldy part. Remember, food does not have to look or smell bad to be unsafe.
- Be very careful when home canning foods and follow canning directions closely. Bacteria may grow in improperly canned food and cause serious illness.
- Do not use foods in unlabeled cans or packages without labels.
- Do not use food in cans that are dented or rusted, in jars that are cracked or have broken seals, or in packages that are torn. These openings may allow the food to be contaminated.
- Discard refrigerated leftovers after 2-3 days.
- WHEN IT DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

There are a few other things you can do to keep your family safe. How many of you have ever had a child choke on some food? What did you do?

Choking can be a problem for young children because they may not have enough muscles to chew and swallow foods properly.

Foods that are small or slippery, such as peanuts or hot dogs, might slip down a young child's throat before he has a chance to chew them.

Foods that are dry and difficult to chew, such as popcorn and nuts, might be swallowed whole by your child.

Foods that are sticky or tough to break apart, such as peanut butter or tough meat, could get stuck in your child's throat.

There are some very specific things you can do to prevent your child from choking on foods. What are some that you know of?

PREVENT CHOKING!

Do not serve these foods to children under age 4.

Spoonfuls of peanut butter	Hard candy
Mini-marshmallows	Popcorn
Large chunks of meat	Raw peas
Nuts, seeds, peanuts	Whole grapes
Raw carrots (in rounds)	Ice cubes
Fish with bones	Raisins
Other dried fruit	Pretzels, chips
Hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds)	

CHANGE FOODS TO MAKE THEM SAFE

Some foods can be changed to make them safer for young children. Try these ideas:

FOOD	KIND OF CHANGE
Hot dogs	Cut in quarters lengthwise, then into small pieces
Whole grapes	Cut in half lengthwise
Nuts	Chop finely
Raw carrots	Chop finely or cut into thin strips
Peanut butter	Spread thinly on crackers; mix with applesauce and cinnamon and spread thinly on bread
Fish with bones	Remove the bones

Activity

- Demonstrate proper hand washing technique.
- Demonstrate how to change some foods to make them safe - you may want to try the peanut butter changes, grapes or carrots.

Evaluation/Wrap-up

- Here is something that you might be interested in (hold up copy of handout). It includes many of the things we talked about today.
- Who would like one? (pass out to interested participants)
- Now that you've had a chance to share ideas and think about this, I'm wondering if someone can share what they will do to make foods safer in your home?
- Thank them for coming to the group and participating. Let them know that they can call you or stop by for more information whenever they wish.

Resources

USDA's Food Safety Education Web site - www.foodsafety.gov

International Food Safety Council Web site - www.foodsafetycouncil.org