

Dressing for the Child Care Kitchen

Each day, millions of children eat meals in the child care setting. It is important that meals are prepared safely to avoid the risk of developing foodborne illnesses. Cooks, chefs, and other food preparers should be dressed in uniform. The uniform can consist of an apron and hair net or a chef's coat and hat. Regardless of the uniform, dressing in the appropriate apparel when preparing meals can enhance food safety.

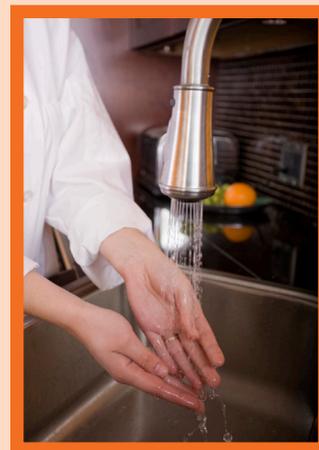
Let's look at the basics of personal hygiene and apparel when preparing meals in the child care kitchen.

Face and Hair

As a child care cook, having a clean face and hair is extremely important. An individual's face and hair can harbor bacteria, just as clothing can. When preparing meals, pull all hair back and cover with a hair net or hat. The smallest strand of hair can contaminate food, so it is important to cover all hair, even bangs. In the case of men with beards, cover the beard with a beard net.

Hands

Hands should be washed before and after putting on food preparation apparel. In addition, hands should be washed frequently when preparing meals and when they have become soiled. Hands harbor bacteria and the bacteria can easily be transferred to clothes, food, and other surface areas. Remember to wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm running water. Individuals involved in food preparation should keep their fingernails trimmed, filed, free from polish, and clean at all times. It is beneficial to wear gloves, but gloves can also harbor bacteria. Use gloves at appropriate times, but when changing tasks, change gloves.



Jewelry

Jewelry complements everyday apparel; however, it is important to avoid wearing jewelry in the kitchen. Stones and gems from items such as rings and bracelets can easily fall into food during preparation, which is potentially hazardous and could create a food safety risk. Rings, specifically, harbor food debris and bacteria and pose a significant threat to food safety in the child care kitchen. Only a single wedding band should be worn. Some states allow medical bracelets to be worn and provide other special conditions pertaining to jewelry. Check with your state agency or governing agency to determine any special conditions or exceptions regarding jewelry.



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Shoes

Shoes are a crucial part of the uniform. While there are a variety of shoe types, many are not designed for the kitchen. When working in the kitchen, avoid heeled shoes, open-toe shoes, open-heel shoes, and unclean or soiled shoes. Choose clean tennis or athletic shoes that are slip resistant. When taking food into an infant and toddler room, apply shoe covers. Infants and toddlers tend to crawl on the floor and this can be a primary source for coming in contact with harmful bacteria.



Clothes

Clothes are a major part of dressing safely in the child care kitchen. Clothes can harbor bacteria, which can easily be transferred to food. Wear clean white or lightly colored clothing. When clothing becomes soiled, change into clean clothes. Wear a bib apron, but remember to remove the apron when exiting the kitchen and when the apron becomes soiled. When wearing a bib apron, make sure the apron is securely tied. Avoid wearing sleeveless or long sleeve shirts and/or very loose clothing.

***Tips and Strategies for Personal Hygiene

- Report to work in good health and dressed in clean attire.
- Avoid wearing nail polish or artificial nails.
- Avoid using the apron as a towel.
- Treat and bandage wounds or sores immediately. When hands are bandaged, wear clean single-use gloves at all times.
- Wash hands properly for at least 20 seconds properly and at the appropriate times.

Key Note to Remember

Young children rely on their teachers, cooks, caregivers, and other child care professionals to provide a safe and healthy environment. Dressing appropriately in the child care kitchen is a key method for keeping everyone safe. Start today, by reviewing your apparel and personal hygiene.



Sources

National Food Service Management Institute. (2010). *Serving safe food in child care*. Retrieved from <http://www.nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=348>

Nutrition Highlights

Child Care Food Program Roundtable

The Child Care Food Program Roundtable will host its 21st Annual Conference in San Diego, California. The conference will be hosted at the Bahia Resort Hotel on Mission Bay, October 15 -17, 2012. The theme this year is “Mission Possible: Scaling New CACFP Heights”. Check out their website at <http://www.ccfproundtable.org/Conferences.aspx>

NFSMI Trainings

NFSMI has a variety of online child care courses available. All online courses are free of charge and can be accessed at any time. Check out our online courses by following the link: <http://www.nfsmi.org/Templates/TemplateDefault.aspx?q=cEIEPTIzNg==>

National Message

USDA 2010 Dietary Guidelines Communications Message Calendar, the theme for September –December is *Foods to Increase*. During this time, the selected key message is “Make at least half your grains whole grains”. Remember the theme and selected message when planning activities. To obtain more information, follow the link at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/MyPlate/CommunicationsMessageCalendar.pdf>



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