

Hygiene and infection control advice

Kitchens:

Kitchen Surface Cleaning: Apply a two stage cleaning protocol of food preparation surfaces and equipment: apply a detergent, then dry and then apply a disinfectant or sanitizer. Sanitizers should no longer be considered as the miracle single use solution to achieve cleaning. For example, they won't work if there is simply too much dirt/grease/food debris in the way preventing enough of the chemical to come into contact with the surface.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions in applying and achieving the required contact time. Clean using this method after every use, especially after preparing/handling raw meat and root vegetables, as well as at the end of the shift during routine cleaning.

Cleaning chemicals: Ensure that the chemicals meet the BS EN1276:1997 or BS EN 13697:2001 standards.

Cloths: Cloths are notorious incubators of food poisoning bacteria. It is strongly recommend that only disposable cloths are used (paper roll/towels or fabric cloths, such as 'J' cloths are popular), which are disposed of after each use. Cloths not disposed of must be subject to a 90°C wash at the end of the day, in addition to regular thorough cleaning throughout the day. It is good practice to have colour coded cloths for raw and Ready to Eat (RTE) areas in the kitchen and other nursery areas.

Mops: You should have a dedicated mop for each nursery room, each toilet area and each kitchen. These should be colour-coded or labelled. Mops and buckets should be stored dry (i.e. not in water) and, ideally, in cupboards. Wash mops after each use. Replace mop heads periodically. Disposable mop heads are also available on the market and you may wish to consider these.

Aprons: Food-handlers should wear disposable aprons when preparing raw meat. Nursery care staff should use disposable aprons when clearing spillages and assisting in toileting.

Cleaning Schedules: There should be a cleaning schedule for the kitchen, for the nursery rooms and for outdoor play areas. Each schedule should list the items to be cleaned, state the cleaning method (including chemical, contact time, equipment needed, any protective wear), frequency of cleaning, allocate tasks to individuals (by job title for example) and have periodic management checks.

Open Fruit Bowls: Open fruit bowls should not be accessible to children. Fruit is to be prepared and given to children by staff or, when part of a children's learning activity the activity should be closely supervised to prevent children sharing fruit. Children and staff should wash hands before and after the activity.

Taps: Taps should be included in cleaning schedules. Use paper towels to turn off taps once hand washing has been completed. Consider installing non-hand operated taps at basins/sinks used by adults in rooms where food is prepared.

Hand-washing: Food-handlers must wash their hands after handling raw meat, root vegetables, bins, on re/entering the kitchen, after going to the toilet and at other key times stated in their induction training. Care staff must wash their hands before serving food, before preparing food (even if just cutting fruit), after changing nappies, after cleaning spillages, after assisting children in the toilet, after going to the toilet, after supervising outdoor play and at other times stated in their induction training. Children must wash their hands before eating, after going to the toilet, after outdoor play and at other times stated in your infection control policy. Hand washing means the use of hot and cold water, or warm water for children, washing with liquid soap, hand drying with paper towels. It does not mean the reliance on of alcohol gel or hand wipes alone.

Separation of Raw & RTE: Where ever possible provide a separate fridge for raw meat and a separate one for RTE food. Where this cannot be achieved (because of space, not cost) then clear separation must be achieved in the same fridge with raw meat at the bottom in lidded containers.

Where possible allocate a food preparation area for raw meat preparation only. Where this cannot be achieved then separation must be achieved through timing and cleaning. i.e. meat prepared at one work surface at one time in the day and then surfaces, utensils etc cleaned thoroughly immediately after use. This might seem obvious but some food businesses struggle with this. Disposable or separate dedicated aprons and hand washing are also necessary at this point.

Beyond the kitchen:

Animal petting: Nurseries often have resident pets. They may also have visiting farms, reptile displays or other animal attractions. Animal petting must be closely supervised- children and staff must wash their hands thoroughly immediately after petting animals. Any spillages (animal urine, animal faeces, animal bedding) must be cleaned immediately. Pet cages must be so placed so that children cannot come into contact with parts of the cages that may be contaminated with animal faeces. Trips to Open farms should be carefully planned- check the farm has hand washing facilities for children with hot and cold running water. Children must hand wash after touching farm animals AND again before eating. Children and staff should wear different footwear at the farm than at the nursery to prevent bringing contamination into the nursery.

Sickness: Children displaying symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting should not be taken by parents to or, accepted by, nursery. Once identified an ill child should be excluded from the care setting until the child has been apparently well for 48 consecutive hours. Parents should seek GP advice if there is bloody diarrhoea.

In the case of the E Coli VTEC 0157 investigation it was well known that children and others were being excluded and screened before being allowed to return to a child care setting. In such circumstances local nurseries should not be tempted to be helpful or identify a business opportunity in offering to accept children from the affected child care setting. Only laboratory documentation which confirms the child is clear of the suspect infection obtained and submitted by the parent, can be accepted by the new nursery. Failure to do so could result in infection spreading to your own children and staff!

Additional infection control measures: Keep outdoor sand pits covered when not in use. The cover should be at least pest resistant. Replace the sand periodically. Do not wash drinking water bottles and cutlery in same sink as that used for cleaning play equipment. Wherever possible use foot pedal operated dustbins. Do not allow bins to over flow before they are emptied. Wellington boots need to be stored away from children's rooms and from toilets. Staff and children should remove shoes in infant rooms. Potty trained children to have supervised hand washing after using the toilet.

Remember that frequent and thorough hand-washing is one of most effective ways of preventing spread of infection. Hand-washing should be encouraged among children. It is good practice that children are taught correct hand-washing technique (including duration) and of its importance. There are many training resources available online to aide in teaching preschool children hand washing. Effective hand washing can only be achieved by rubbing hands in mixed hot and cold water and soap. Alcohol hand gels and wipes don't offer the same protection and are not a substitute for soap and water.

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Note: Any settings with issues or concerns should contact their local authority.

Useful links: Visit www.food.gov.uk for guidance on E Coli VTEC 0157 controls in food businesses and on "Safer Food, Better Business".

Visit www.hpa.org.uk(search: hand-washing) for hand-washing guidelines.

Guidance on infection control in schools and child care settings from the HPA may also be useful.

Visit www.fightbac.org for children's hand-washing activities.

Visit <http://www.face-online.org.uk/CodeofPractice> for details of controlling infection from farm visits.