

長者膳食服務

食物安全指引

Food Safety Guidelines

on Catering Services
for the Elderly



食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

Catering services for the elderly are provided by many different organisations. As there is a great variety of food and the elderly are usually more vulnerable to illnesses, food handlers should pay particular attention to the various risk factors when preparing the meals in order to protect the health of the elderly.

Understanding Food Poisoning

Food poisoning is caused by consumption of foods or drinks contaminated with pathogens (including salmonella, norovirus and parasites), biochemical toxins or toxic chemicals.

Patients usually show gastrointestinal symptoms like nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomiting. The incubation period usually varies from hours to days.

Guidelines on Preparation of Meals for the Elderly

1

Facilities

- Ensure that adequate facilities, such as stove, refrigerator and heat-holding equipment are available.

2

Purchase and receipt of ingredients

- Purchase ingredients from reliable and reputable suppliers.
- Check the quality of ingredients upon receipt.

3

Storage facilities and temperature control

- Stick to “first-in-first-out” principle for food storage.
- Check and record the temperature of refrigerators regularly. Keep chillers at 4°C or below and freezers at -18°C or below.
- Keep raw and cooked foods in separate refrigerators. If they are stored in the same refrigerator, put cooked foods above the raw ones to prevent cross-contamination.



4

Food handling and cooking

- Defrost frozen food in chillers or under running water.
- Cook food thoroughly. Use a thermometer to ensure that the centre of food reaches 75°C or above for at least 30 seconds.
- To cater for the special dietary needs of the elderly, we should:
 - adopt the “cook-serve system” to shorten the food preparation time as far as practicable;
 - carefully handle cooked food that needs further processing (e.g. to blend food into a smooth puree); and
 - clean and sanitise all food contacting surfaces thoroughly before use (especially blenders for cooked food and feeding spoons). Sanitisation can be done by using approved bactericidal agents or immersing cleaned utensils in boiling water for at least one minute.



5

Delivery and consumption

- Advise the elderly to have the meals as soon as possible and finish them in one go.
- When portioning the food on site, one must ensure that:
 - cooked food is stored in heat-insulating containers and kept above 60°C; and
 - there is adequate space, equipment (e.g. food warming devices) and manpower to maintain cleanliness and to distribute the food efficiently.
- For food delivery, one must ensure that:
 - the food is stored in heat-insulating containers (e.g. thermal lunch boxes) and kept above 60°C until they are ready for consumption;
 - the delivery time is shortened as far as practicable; and
 - the elderly are reminded to keep the food above 60°C if the food is not consumed immediately.
- Check the food temperature on a random basis before distributing and delivering the food to ensure that the food is kept above 60°C.



6

Maintaining good personal hygiene practices

- Wash hands with liquid soap for at least 20 seconds before handling food or after using the toilets.
- Food handlers with symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting should not handle food.

7

Handling food complaints

Food complaints can reflect problems that may be overlooked during the food preparation process. Thus, caterers should handle them promptly and positively:

- Develop a contingency plan in advance.
- If problems are identified, ask the elderly to stop eating immediately to prevent food incident.
- Maintain the following records at all times to facilitate follow-up actions:
 - a daily name list of the elderly to serve, including information such as the number of persons, their addresses and the food types, etc.;
 - emergency contact numbers of the relatives of the elderly;
 - a list of ingredient suppliers; and
 - daily purchase record.
- Caterers should show their contact information such as telephone number and addresses at a prominent position on the food containers for the elderly and the staff of the elderly centres.



For more information or other enquiries,
please contact the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department on
2868 0000.