

Health and Safety

for congregations

Food safety for congregations in the ACT

How this guide can help you

Food and hospitality are an important aspect of life for our congregations. Food can however be potentially dangerous if it is not handled correctly. Bacteria in food can multiply and make us unwell or can trigger an allergic reaction in some people. Vulnerable people, such as the elderly, children and those that suffer from allergies (such as anaphylaxis) are also at higher risk. Following these simple steps when handling food can help keep everyone in your congregation safe.

Food safety tips

Keep it cold

- Keep cold food below 5 ° C
- Put food that needs to be kept cold in the fridge straight away
- Don't eat food that's meant to be in the fridge if it has been left out for 2 hours or more
- Defrost foods in the fridge, especially meats
- If potentially hazardous foods (see below for definition) need to be cooled, their temperature should be reduced as quickly as possible
- To freeze potentially hazardous food safely, place foods in shallow containers in the freezer

Keep it hot

- It is recommended to cook and reheat foods to at least 75 ° C
- If you are keeping food hot (i.e. in a bain marie) the food needs to remain at 75 ° C or hotter
- Make sure there is no pink left in cooked meats, such as poultry
- Look for clear juices before serving chicken
- Heat all marinades to boiling point if they contain raw meat juices
- Consider using a food thermometer if heating foods regularly

Keep it clean

- Wash hands thoroughly before starting to prepare food. Our handwashing instructions can be found [here](#)
- Keep benches, kitchen equipment and tableware clean and dry
- Don't let raw meat juices contaminate other food
- Separate raw and cooked food and use different cutting boards and knives
- Don't make food for others if you are unwell
- Utensils and equipment must be thoroughly washed in warm soapy water and dried with a clean tea towel

Check the food label

- Don't eat food past a 'use-by' date
- Note the best before date
- Follow storage and cooking instructions
- Be allergy aware and avoid using foods containing serious allergens
- Ask for information about unpackaged goods

Other

- Discourage left-overs from being stored in communal fridges. Throw away food that is not dated and labelled



The above foods or ingredients are the most common causes of allergies and anaphylaxis in Australia

Food labels and allergens

Some foods and ingredients can cause severe allergic reactions including anaphylaxis. Declaring allergens can therefore be important. If someone asks, it is important to be able to provide the following information;

- Name of the food
- Information about allergenic ingredients
- Nutrition information panels

While it is not required, it is good practice to label foods containing allergens to ensure people can make safe food choices.

Selling food for a fundraising event

In the ACT non-profit community organisations who sell food for fundraising events are exempt from the requirements (under the Food Act 2001), if they are run by volunteers (not paid, or paid to manage unpaid volunteers) and food is only served for fundraising purposes. This means you do not need to register with the Health Protection Service or nominate a Food Safety Supervisor.

However, all organisations serving food to the public still have a responsibility to ensure the food is safe. Some food also carries more risk, such as potentially hazardous food.

Examples of potentially hazardous food:

- Raw meats, cooked meats and food containing meat, such as casseroles, curries, lasagne and meat pies
- Dairy products and foods containing dairy products, such as milk, cream, custard and dairy-based desserts
- Seafood and food containing seafood, such as seafood salad
- Processed fruits and vegetables, such as prepared salads and ready-to-eat fruit packs
- Cooked rice and pasta
- Processed foods containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein-rich food, such as quiche and soya bean products
- Foods that contain any of the above foods, such as sandwiches, rice salads and pasta salads

These foods have significant safety issues, such as temperature control, thorough cooking, cross-contamination and storage. Where possible these foods should be avoided. If this is not possible, you must ensure safe food practices. In addition to the tips provided above, we have included some posters produced by ACT Health which can be accessed [here](#).

Training and supervision

People who are preparing food to be sold to raise money for charitable purposes do not require specific cooking or food handling skills, nor do they need to have a designated food safety supervisor. It is however important that food handlers have the practical skills and knowledge appropriate to the type of food they are preparing.

I'M ALERT Food Safety website is a free online training program available to food handlers and any other interested members of the public. The I'M ALERT training provides a basic understanding of safe food handling. It contains quizzes to test knowledge on general food safety and a certificate is issued on completion.

This course is strongly recommended to anyone who handles food. It takes approximately 2 hours to complete. Click [here](#) to access the course.

Providing food for free or donating food

Donating food can be an important way we help those around us. It is however important we follow food safety standards to ensure the food is safe and to ensure we are legally protected.

To ensure food is safe to donate:

- Ensure food is safe to eat when it leaves your possession
- Provide any information that is relevant for food handling and for safe consumption to the recipient
- Check and throw away any food that is past the use-by-date. Food that has passed the best before date can be donated if it is not damaged, deteriorated or perished
- Check the food for spoilage and ensure food labels are legible. Add food labels (where possible) to ensure the recipient can make safe food choices such as for allergies
- Observe temperature control requirements, and let the recipient know if there are any specific instructions
- Observe safe food practices

Food and children's services

There are additional responsibilities for children's services such as long day care, occasional care and employer sponsored child care. Under the food regulations, services such as camps, those providing religious instruction (such as Sunday School) or where children attend irregularly are however exempt. Children's services that prepare and serve meals and snacks are required to comply with the Food Standards Code and Food Act 2003 found. A Food Safety Program must also be established. Click [here](#) to find a guide.

