



## Kitchen Safety for Young Cooks

Is your family busy with work, school, sports, and/or extra curricular activities while simultaneously juggling family time, homework time, exercise, and proper nutrition? Furthermore, is your child(s) spending more time alone or with other family members after school? Most times after school, children tend to congregate in the kitchen. Therefore, it is important for parents and their children to review the importance of kitchen safety practices among these “young cooks.”



Cooking with children can provide fun activities and great educational experiences while incorporating an opportunity for family bonding. It is a way to respect their independence while remaining close to answer questions and to monitor their mistakes. With this in mind, what are a few basic kitchen safety practices that should be followed? Below are a few suggestions of kitchen safety practices for young cook:



### Washing and Cleaning:



- Remember to wash your hands with soap and warm water before preparing, cooking or eating a snack or meal because hands can carry many germs. Scrub the front and back of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails for about 20 seconds. Rinse your hands under water and dry with a clean towel.
- Keep your washed hands away from your face, hair and pets. If you touch any of these places, rewash your hands again before preparing, cooking or eating foods.
- Rinse all fruits and vegetables under clean running water before using them when preparing cooking or eating a snack or meal.
- Clean and wash equipment and utensils thoroughly when you are finished.
- Wear clean clothes or a clean apron. Avoid loose fitted clothing.

### Using Utensils and Equipment:

- Start off with simple equipment and progress to more complicated equipment. For example, use a whisk first then move on to an electric mixer. Use one large task at a time.
- Prevent breakage by using plastic or stainless steel utensils (i.e. measuring cup) rather than glass.



- When opening canned goods, be careful of the sharp edges of the lid.
- When using a knife to cut food, always have adult supervision, cut away from your body, and pay attention to what you are cutting. Hold knives pointed down and put knives away when not in use.
- Make sure you have the proper tools (i.e. measuring cups, utensils, pots, cutting board) and ingredients before you begin.
- Make sure that handles of pots and pans are faced inward to prevent accidents.
- Keep oven mitts or pot holders handy to move hot items from the oven, microwave, range and toaster.



### **Commonly used Appliances – Microwave, Oven, Stove, and Toaster:**

- Read equipment directions carefully.
- Never turn on empty equipment (i.e. never turn on an empty microwave) and turn off appliances when you are finished using them.
- Only use containers, dishes or utensils appropriate for the equipment, such as microwaveable containers in the microwave.
- To prevent household fires, do not leave cooking food unattended and keep flammable objects away from the toaster or range.



### **Burns:**

- Children's burns are most commonly caused by hot liquids. Prevent them by using a hot pad, oven mitts, and pot holders. Avoid having younger children carry hot foods.
- If you are burned, place the affected area under cool, running water for about 10-15 minutes.
- If burns start to blister, cover or wrap with sterile gauze or a clean cloth and see a doctor immediately.

### **Storage of foods:**

- Remember to store foods properly. Follow the simple rule of keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold, whether you are cooking or eating. Perishable foods should NOT be left out for more than 2 hours. If in doubt, throw it out!
- Discard foods with mold, and foods that look and/or smell bad. (Note: Foods contaminated by germs that can cause foodborne illness may not look or smell bad.)





How do you know what is the appropriate age for children to start cooking? Parents and caregivers should consider the developmental abilities of their children before beginning safe kitchen practices. Here are a few suggestions of safe kitchen practices for age appropriate young cooks:

≥ 5 years old:

- Rinse foods and mix ingredients in a bowl with parental supervision.
- Use a plastic or butter knife to spread or cut foods.

≥ 10 years old:

- Use electrical kitchen appliances and equipment such as a microwave, blender, toaster oven, electric mixer and food processor with parental supervision.



≥ 12 years old:

- Peel vegetables, use a hand grater, and use a can opener.
- Turn burners off and on and select temperature for ovens and toasters.
- Chop or slice foods with a regular knife with parental supervision.



≥ 14 years old:

- Operating equipment, appliance and utensils carefully without adult supervision.

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