



World Health Organization

Knowledge = Prevention

The five keys to safer food

www.who.int/foodsafety/consumer/5keys/en/



Reducing foodborne diseases by educating consumers

Why educate the consumers?

Each day millions of people become ill and thousands die from a preventable foodborne disease. More than 200 diseases are transmitted through food.

Although governments throughout the world are attempting to improve the safety of the food supply, the occurrence of foodborne disease remains a significant health issue in both developed and developing countries. In recent years, a number of extremely serious foodborne disease outbreaks have occurred on virtually every continent, demonstrating both the public health and social significance of foodborne diseases.

Even though food contamination can occur at any stage of the food production chain, **a high proportion of foodborne disease is caused by foods improperly prepared or handled at home or in food service establishments.** Proper food handling is of particular importance for people in high-risk groups (e.g. children, older people, pregnant and immunocompromised individuals) and their care-givers.

Education of consumers and food handlers, to raise awareness of food safety risks is, therefore, essential to prevent foodborne diseases and ensure better health.

What is WHO doing?

As part of its global strategy to decrease the burden of foodborne diseases, WHO has developed materials and training activities aimed at educating all categories of food handlers as well as the ordinary consumer about their responsibilities for food safety.

Activities

WHO identified the need to communicate a simple and clear global health message based on scientific evidence and the necessity to provide countries with materials that are easy to use, reproduce, and adapt to different target audiences.

After thorough consultation with food safety experts and risk communicators, WHO initiated a health promotion campaign based upon five simple rules, to help ensure food and water safety during food handling and preparation. **The five keys to safer food:** 1) Keep clean; 2) Separate raw and cooked; 3) Cook food thoroughly; 4) Keep food at safe temperatures; 5) Use safe water and raw materials.

"Sometimes very simple messages and measures can have a big impact on health protection. These Five Keys to Safer Food have already contributed to the prevention of foodborne illness and deserve to be communicated more widely"

Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO

The mission of the WHO Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses is to lower the burden of disease from food and animals, focusing on industrialized and traditional production systems, and integrating prevention from farm to table. This work includes the provision of scientific advice, efficient standard setting, and clear communication in support of foodborne and zoonotic disease prevention and international efforts to food-related outbreak detection and response.

WHO actively promotes the dissemination of the 'Five Keys' message and its adaptation to the local level, and to this end has developed the following educational materials:

- The five keys to safer food poster, which contains the key message, specific instructions and explanations as to WHY;
- The five keys to safer food manual, which suggests ways to communicate the message;
- The train the trainer course directed to women

WHO is extending the Five Keys to Safer Food concept to cover additional groups across the farm to table continuum to promote safe food handling practices and prevent foodborne diseases.

Recently published, the manual *Five Keys to growing safer fruits and vegetables: promoting health by decreasing microbial contamination* describes key practices to reduce microbial contamination and raises awareness of the links between the health of humans, animals and ecosystems and how failures in good hygienic practices in one sector can affect the others



○ Achievements to date

- Five keys poster translated and adapted into 67 languages.
- Five keys educational projects implemented in over 100 countries (health promotion campaigns and educational projects, including training of food handlers in hospitals, health centres, restaurants, canteens, street food vending sites, training of school children, training of women in impoverished neighbourhoods)
- Five keys message adapted to travellers (WHO Guide on safe food for travellers), to healthy markets (WHO Guide on healthy food markets), to street-food vendors (INFOSAN Note on Basic steps to improve safety of street-vended food)
- Five keys message used to prevent spread of disease in emergency situations following a natural disaster (e.g. the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti), and during other disease outbreaks (e.g. cholera)
- Five keys message used in preparation plans for mass gathering events (e.g. 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, 2010 FIFA World Cup, 2010 Shanghai Expo) both to educate consumers and train food handlers
- Five keys concept extended to offer broader advice by providing simple messages on healthy diets and physical activity (The 3 Fives: five keys to safer food, a healthy diet and appropriate physical activity)
- **The WHO Five Keys to Safer Food messages adopted and adapted by countries and recognized as an international reference source**

○ Planned activities

- Continue to assist countries in developing sustainable preventive educational programmes
- Develop Five Keys training materials targeted to various audiences to cover the farm to fork continuum
- Encourage systematic integration of food safety education into nutrition programmes and other programmes directed to high risks groups (infants, children, pregnant women, the elderly and the immunocompromised e.g. individuals living with HIV/AIDS)
- Foster partnership with other International Organizations, NGOs, Foundations and other stakeholders to maximize the dissemination of the WHO message
- Promote the integration of food safety education into school curricula

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