



## Meal and Snack Preparation Guidelines

Prepared by the Health Consultant Team at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

Children learn how to use eating utensils, make food choices and learn socially acceptable table behaviors by watching adult role models. Adults need to provide a clean and safe setting for meal and snack time.

### Clean and Sanitize

- Clean and sanitize table, counter, faucet/sink handles, highchair trays, and any other surface used for food prep/service (ex. top of shelves) before and after all meals and snacks.

#### Process for washing/sanitizing surfaces:

- Spray surface with soap and water mixture.
- Wipe surfaces with paper towel. (A clean washcloth can be used instead of paper towels but cloth should be used for only one meal or snack time and laundered before reusing.)
- Spray surface with bleach solution labeled for food area, then wait 2 minutes. Follow manufacturer's product instructions exactly if another sanitizer is used instead of bleach.
- Wipe surfaces with paper towel to remove sanitizer before use.

### Wash Hands

- Staff and children should wash hands with soap and water at a clean sink\* before setting table, preparing or serving food, bottle prep or eating.

*\* A "Clean Sink" is where no washing after diapering or toileting takes place or where the sink/faucet has been disinfected if it is used for handwashing after diapering or toileting.*

- Children should be seated immediately at the table or in a highchair after handwashing. Children should not touch or play with objects or toys to prevent recontamination of hands.

### Setting the Table

- Place food on napkin\*, plate or appropriate serving dish – not directly on table or highchair tray.  
*\*Napkins, styrofoam cups, dishware and disposable utensils are not recommended to use with infants.*  
*\*Styrofoam cups and disposal utensils are not recommended to use with toddlers.*
- Centers and out-of-home group facilities are required to handle food with serving utensils or wear food service gloves. Do not reuse gloves after they've been removed.
- Keep serving bowls/trays covered when not being used.
- Handle utensils and cups at the base to prevent contamination.

### Meal Time Safety Reminders

- Prepare food in ¼ inch pieces for infants and ½ inch for toddlers to avoid choking.
- Test temperature of food and liquids before serving to children.
- Serve fluids in sippy cups or bottles that have been washed and sanitized between uses. Discard contents after feeding or meal.
- Baby food that is fed directly out of the jar should not be re-fed due to possible contamination with bacteria.
- If utensils/dishes/cups fall on the floor, replace with clean ones or wash before giving them back to the child.
- Always keep your eyes on the children when eating and, if possible, stay within arm's reach of the children in case of choking.

### After Meal/Snack Clean Up

- Clean children's faces and hands with individual clean washcloths, as needed. Then wash children's hands with soap and water at a sink. Change children's clothing if soiled from eating.
- Clean floor right after meal or snack so young children are not tempted to eat food off of the floor.
- Wash and sanitize tables, counter tops, and highchair trays.

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