



Physical Activity & Nutrition Outside School Hours

FACT SHEET #5

KITCHEN SAFETY

Kitchens can pose many dangers with heat, electricity, gas, water, appliances, knives and other sharp objects. Therefore it is important to closely supervise food preparation activities and be prepared with risk assessments conducted and read by all educators.

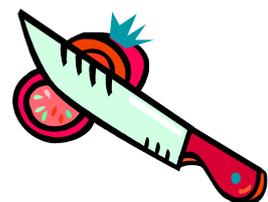
Your budding culinary artists may want to have their hands on every kitchen utensil available. However they may not have the attention span or eye/hand coordination needed for using such appliances or sharp knives. Respond appropriately and involve children in other tasks suitable to their skill level such as weighing, measuring or mixing. Give children a tour of the kitchen identifying appliances and utensils that are safe and unsafe for them to use or touch.

Evaluate the area and the numbers of children wanting to be involved and ensure there is suitable space for the children to move around and suitable facilities so that children don't need to stand on chairs or stools. Lastly make sure you allow plenty of time for cooking activities, as accidents are most likely to happen when children are rushed.

Knife Handling

Introduce younger children to knives by allowing them to use a butter knife for simple tasks such as spreading butter on bread. Skill and competence of older children should be assessed prior to using sharper knives. Knife handling instruction should include:

- Knowing how to hold a knife – by the handle, not the blade;
- Carrying the knife safely – using the handle, pointing down by your side, not out in front of you;
- If the knife is dropped - step back and let it fall don't try to catch it;
- Not putting knives into a sink full of water – someone could reach in and cut themselves. It is best to clean, dry and put away knives after they are used.



Cutting Skills

Handling knives and using them for cutting are two different skill sets. Children's individual skill and competence must be assessed prior to giving them opportunity for cutting and slicing activities. Educators must use close supervision and clear instructions when demonstrating and when observing children using sharp knives. Clear instructions may include:

- Using a cutting board - don't cut things when holding them in your hand. Pay attention to what you are doing, not getting distracted and always keeping your eyes on your cutting;
- Using a good sharp knife or steak knife - dull knives are more likely to cause an injury;
- When cutting – correctly holding whatever you are cutting by tucking/curling your fingers around it;
- Holding the knife - in a pinch grip, using a rolling motion when you cut. As a guide, you could put tape some on the knife where your fingers are supposed to go;
- When cutting - the tip of the knife should remain on the cutting board;



Heat Awareness and Safety

Prior to children using ovens, cooktops and/or microwaves their individual skill and competence level should be assessed. Children using equipment involving heat and/or steam must be closely supervised and have been given prior safety instructions on the particular appliance. Safety issues discussed may include:

- Understanding the dials and controls of the oven, cooktop or microwave;
- Adjusting the shelves of the oven before turning it on;
- Ensuring the oven or cooktop is turned off after use;
- Using oven gloves when touching anything hot;
- Turning saucepan handles towards the back of the stove to prevent knocking them over;
- When uncovering food that has been taken out of the microwave, ensure you take the cover off facing away from you so the hot steam doesn't get you in the face.

Food Handling

Food preparation and cooking experiences are great opportunities for children to gain valuable food handling skills. It is important for educators to ensure children follow safe food handling when involved in food experiences as this helps to reduce the risk of cross contamination and ensures food is safe for eating. Safe food handling practices include:

- Washing hands prior to handling any food;
- Instructing children not to lick fingers or utensils while participating in cooking experiences;
- Ensuring food preparation equipment and surfaces are clean to prevent cross contamination;
- Ensuring separate equipment and utensils are used for preparation of raw and cooked foods;

Involving children in cooking activities within the kitchen environment is an important area for teaching life skills and sustainable living, as well as ensuring children have an increased awareness of healthy food and good nutrition.

