



Ministry of Agriculture
and Environment



GUIDELINES FOR FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOLERS

USING LEARNING-THROUGH-PLAY APPROACH
(Teaching book 1: For Preschool Teachers and Educational Managers)

HANOI, SEP 2024



The sincere thanks

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About the project

Funded by Global Affairs Canada, our project seeks to enhance the Vietnamese people (Ha Noi & Ho Chi Minh city) access to safe and competitive agri-food products, with an aim to improve the well-being of consumers as well as other agri-food actors. SAFEGRO project is implemented by Alinea International in partnership with the University of Guelph.

Food safety is a major public health concern. Many people do not trust food safety enforcement at informal markets where they buy most of their food. Trade for Vietnam's commodity exports also suffers due to a lack of compliance with international standards.

SAFEGRO project works with national and municipal governments to modernize food safety capacity among regulators, thousands of smallholder farmers, cooperatives, processors, retailers and consumers along specific meat and vegetables value chains in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city. SAFEGRO supports Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Industry and Trade jointly.



List of acronyms

FS	Food Safety
GAC	Global Affairs of Canada
PE	Preschool Education
FightBAC	The Partnership for Food Safety Education
SAFEGRO	Safe Food for Growth Project
WHO	World Health Organization



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Introduction

Food safety is increasingly being highlighted in the media and emphasized in schools. As government regulations continue to draw attention at both national and local levels, teachers and schools are making efforts to ensure food safety within their classrooms and institutions. However, many teachers lack appropriate materials to introduce this topic effectively to their pupils.

The Guidelines for Food Safety Education for Preschool Children was developed under the Safe Food for Growth (SAFEGRO) Project, funded by the Canadian Government for Vietnam. The guidelines are developed based on the Partnership for Food Safety Education (FightBAC) program¹ - a public-private partnership created to reduce foodborne illnesses by educating the public in the United States on safe food handling practices.

The content of these guidelines has been adapted and tailored to the Vietnamese context. Specifically, it aligns with: (i) The objectives, content, method, and principles of the preschool education curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)²; (ii) Current food safety regulations for schools issued by the Ministry of Health (MOH). Additionally, the guidelines have been adjusted based on lessons learned from the SAFEGRO-funded gender-responsive food safety education model implemented in preschools in the Gia Lam district, Hanoi.

The purpose of this document is to provide preschool teachers with reference materials on integrating food safety content and methods into the preschool education curriculum.

The lessons are designed to educate children the importance of food safety practices and to convey these essential messages to their families. The guidelines also provide teachers with the tools they need to make the topic of food safety engaging for both themselves and young children. Teachers are encouraged to flexibly integrate or incorporate the lessons into various educational activities throughout the school year.

Scope of Implementation: The guidelines for food safety education can be applied to preschool classes for children aged 3-5 years.

Target Users: Preschool teachers and preschool education administrators/managers.

Structure: The document consists of three parts:

- **Part 1:** Overview of food safety, method and approach
- **Part 2:** Guidelines for integrating food safety education into preschool education curriculum
- **Part 3:** Collaborating with parents to guide children in practicing food safety at home.

¹ Source: <https://www.fightbac.org>

² Source: Preschool Education Program, issued as an attachment to MOET Circular No. 01/VBHN-BGDDT dated 13/4/2021. Link: https://moet.gov.vn/content/vanban/Lists/VBDH/Attachments/2147/01_VBHN-BGD%C4%90T.PDF



PART 1

Overview of food safety content, method and approach

What is Food Safety?

According to Vietnam's Law on Food Safety: "food safety means the assurance that food does not harm human health or life (Clause 1, Article 2, Law on Food Safety). Food is considered safe when it is handled and stored hygienically throughout production, care, packaging, and processing stages.

What is Food Safety Education?

Food safety education for preschoolers involves educators providing knowledge and fostering behaviors related to food safety through daily learning, play, and experiential activities. Food safety education for children should occur not only in schools but also at home, facilitated by parents and family members.

Is Food Safety Education for preschoolers necessary?

Food safety education is crucial. When children understand basic principles and repeatedly practice them, they develop habits of hygiene and healthy eating.

Children under five years old are the group most at risk of Salmonella infection. Their immune systems are not fully developed, making them less capable of fighting infections compared to adults. In addition,

the stomach acid of young children is less potent, which reduces its ability to kill harmful bacteria. These factors make children more susceptible to illnesses [1]. Therefore, educating children and their caregivers on proper hygiene and food safety practices helps ensure better health and comprehensive physical development for children.

What does Food Safety Education include?

This document suggests **6 topics**, corresponding to **6 lessons**:

- Bacteria and how harmful bacteria enter the human body.
- Handwashing with soap.
- Washing fruits under running water.
- Cleaning the dining table before and after meals.
- Distinguishing between raw and cooked food.
- Storing food in the refrigerator.

These six (6) lessons are designed based on the five food safety principles of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Vietnam, which include:

- 1. Keep clean**
- 2. Separate raw and cooked foods**



3. Cook thoroughly

4. Store food at safe temperatures

5. Use safe water and safe raw ingredients

These five (5) principles are reiterated and reinforced through the 6 lessons, which are designed to be familiar and closely aligned with children's everyday activities.

What approaches and methods are used in food safety education for preschoolers?

The approach to food safety education is based on three key factors:

(i) Children's competence: Children's skill development and competencies vary by age. For instance, a 3-year-old may exhibit learning and skill acquisition similar to a 4- or 5-year-old. As a result, the knowledge and skills regarding food safety topics in this document are not divided strictly by age group. Teachers can adapt the food safety content to suit the abilities of the children they oversee.

(ii) Gender sensitivity: When organizing food safety educational activities (such as cooking, shopping, cleaning the dining table), there should be no gender-based distinctions. Teachers are encouraged to engage both boys and girls equally in all types of activities and games.

(iii) Children's participation: The learning-through-play method will be maximized in all food safety lessons. Through

this approach, children can experience real-life scenarios, interact with peers, repeat activities, and find learning both meaningful and enjoyable.

- Encourage children to participate in all educational activities through hands-on experiences, such as cleaning tables, playing cooking games, washing hands, washing fruits, and organizing or storing food.
- Use a variety of learning formats, including individual learning, small-group or large-group activities, role-playing, drawing, and coloring.
- Flexibly integrate food safety education into daily activities such as morning greetings, dismissal time, study time, playtime, meals-naps-hygiene, and afternoon activities.
- Collaborate with parents to encourage children to continue exploring, practicing, and maintaining food safety habits at home.

Part II below presents the core content of the lessons and suggests ways to integrate them into activities within the preschool education program.



PART 2

Guidelines for integrating food safety education into preschool curriculum

2.1. Framework for Food Safety Education (FSE)

The framework below is designed to teach young children the importance of food safety practices and to convey this critical message to their families. The suggested activities/

methods aim to make the topic of food safety engaging and enjoyable for both teachers and students

Content	Objectives (Expected Outcomes)	Suggested Activities	Reference Materials
1. Bacteria and their pathways into the human body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children can state the 5 food safety principles: (i) Keep clean; (ii) Separate raw and cooked foods; (iii) Cook thoroughly; (iv) Chill; and (v) Use safe water; ✓ Children understand that pathogenic bacteria and parasites can enter the human body through food, drinks, and unwashed hands before eating; ✓ Children develop the habit of washing hands before meals and after using the restroom 	<p>Watch and discuss the video: Eliminating Bacteria</p> <p>Storytelling: Share The Story of Bacteria</p> <p>Role-playing: Children act out scenarios based on The Story of Bacteria (Appendix 3)</p> <p>Integration: Integrate food safety content into scientific exploration activities about animals and plants (Preschool Education Curriculum)</p> <p>Notes: Avoid scaring children or making them fearful of bacteria</p>	<p>Watch the video: Eliminating Bacteria from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-4SozASM-sTo&t=25s</p> <p>Additional materials: Material 2 – The Story of Bacteria, and Colorful Bacteria Puppets</p>



Content	Objectives (Expected Outcomes)	Suggested Activities	Reference Materials
<p>2. Handwashing with soap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children apply the principle of keeping clean and develop habits of washing hands and cleaning dining tables. ✓ Children understand the importance of washing hands with soap before touching food, after using the toilet, and when their hands are dirty. ✓ Children understand the importance of washing hands thoroughly and for enough time: wash hands for the duration of singing the Happy Birthday song, approximately 20-30 seconds. (Advanced level: Children learn to follow all 6 steps of proper handwashing) ✓ Children know to keep their hands clean: avoid thumb-sucking or wiping hands on their clothing. 	<p>Listen to a song with handwashing illustrations, with the teacher demonstrating and explaining the steps, and children follow along</p> <p>Practice: Handwashing at school and home, with posters of the six handwashing steps placed inside and outside restrooms, as well as near sinks (Preschool Education Program).</p> <p>Integration: Teachers observe children’s handwashing skills before lunch and after nap-time bathroom breaks, providing corrections as needed.</p> <p>Drawing and coloring pictures related to cleanliness</p> <p>Parent interaction: Share a poem about handwashing and illustrations of the six-step handwashing process with parents. Encourage parents to print or display these illustrations in their bathrooms. Parents can read the poem/ sing handwashing songs with their children</p>	<p>Watch the video: Eliminating Bacteria from 3:44 to 6:02: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-4SozASM-sTo&t=25s</p> <p>Additional materials: Material 2 – Coloring pages on handwashing with soap; and use paper towels or single-use cloths for drying hands</p>



Content	Objectives (Expected Outcomes)	Suggested Activities	Reference Materials
3. Washing fruit before eating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Children understand the principle of keeping clean and know that bacteria can be removed by washing vegetables and fruits under running water before eating.✓ Children develop the habit of washing their hands and fruits under running water before eating	<p>Practice: Wash real fruits under running water in class (Appendix 5).</p> <p>Watch the video: Giáo dục ATTP cho trẻ mẫu giáo “Food Safety Education for Preschoolers”</p> <p>Creative integration: Including activities like sorting pictures or coloring illustrations on keeping clean. Incorporate this activity into afternoon sessions or dismissal times (Preschool Education Program).</p> <p>Parent interaction: Encourage parents to involve their children in washing fruits at home. Talk with their children about the importance of washing fruits under running water. Record a video of the activity and share it with the teacher</p>	<p>Watch the video Eliminating Bacteria from 6:27 to 7:00: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-4SozASM-sTo&t=25s</p> <p>Additional materials: Material 2 – Coloring pages illustrating the steps of washing fruits under running water</p>



Content	Objectives (Expected Outcomes)	Suggested Activities	Reference Materials
<p>4. Cleaning the dining table before and after meals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children apply the principle of keeping clean ✓ Children develop skills for cleaning the dining table before and after meals. ✓ Children understand the importance of keeping the dining table clean by not placing backpacks, bags, shoes, or socks on the table, as bacteria from these items can contaminate food. ✓ Children refrain from sitting on or propping their feet on dining tables 	<p>Practice: Children clean dining tables before and after lunch or snack time/afternoon meal (Appendix 6).</p> <p>Watch the video: Giáo dục ATTP cho trẻ mẫu giáo “Food Safety Education for Preschoolers”</p> <p>Drawing and coloring: Illustrations of keeping clean. Remind children of items that should not be placed on the dining table, such as toys, backpacks/bags, clothes, socks, or pets. Encourage children to name additional items that should not be placed on the table.</p> <p>Integration: Cleaning the dining table before and after lunch in class (Preschool Education Program).</p> <p>Parent engagement: Encourage parents to involve children in cleaning dining tables at home.</p> <p>Let children practice cleaning the dining table at home before and after dinner with their parents (parents can record a video and share it with the teacher)</p>	<p>Watch the video Eliminating Bacteria from 4:40 to 6:25:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-4SozASM-sTo&t=25s</p> <p>Additional materials: Material 2 - Coloring pages identifying food safety mistakes on the dining table.</p>



Content	Objectives (Expected Outcomes)	Suggested Activities	Reference Materials
5. Storing food in the refrigerator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children understand the principle of separating raw and cooked food. ✓ Children apply the principle of separation by storing RAW and COOKED food in different refrigerator compartments ✓ Children can distinguish between raw and cooked food. ✓ Children know how to arrange RAW and COOKED food separately in different refrigerator compartments. ✓ Children know how (develop skills) to store RAW and COOKED food in individual containers with lids and keep them in the refrigerator. ✓ Children understand the need to refrigerate their unfinished drinks (e.g., milk, soft drinks) after opening 	<p>Practice: Children practice wrapping food and organizing it in the fridge’s chilled and freezer compartments (real or model refrigerator).</p> <p>Games: Play a competitive game simulating grocery shopping and classifying food during cooking/family games.</p> <p>Drawing, cutting and pasting pictures, and coloring pictures about: food separation</p> <p>Group discussion: Divide into groups or form a circle to discuss why RAW and COOKED foods need to be separated. Teachers can draw from children’s experiences.</p> <p>Practice: Use plastic wrap to cover food or store it in containers for refrigeration.</p> <p>Game: “Which Team is Correct?” (organizing food in the refrigerator).</p> <p>Integration: Include this activity in learning corners or afternoon sessions.</p> <p>Parent engagement: Share the lesson’s messages with parents and encourage parents to involve their children in practicing wrapping, organizing, and storing food in the refrigerator together at home.</p> <p>Parents can record videos and share them with teachers</p>	<p>Watch the video Eliminating Bacteria from 7:00 to 8:47:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-4SozASM-sTo&t=25s</p> <p>Additional materials: Material 2 - Coloring pages of food items that need to be refrigerated</p>



Content	Objectives (Expected Outcomes)	Suggested Activities	Reference Materials
<p>6. Identifying edible-spoiled, and raw cooked food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Children apply the principle of cooking thoroughly (Appendix 8). ✓ Children recognize and avoid eating raw food ✓ Children do not eat food with unusual colors, mold, or foul smells (using observation and smell). ✓ Children can distinguish between fresh fruits and spoiled, bruised, or rotten fruits 	<p>Observe real images of cooked and uncooked food (for example: raw pink meat and fish) or fresh produces compared with wilted or spoiled ones</p> <p>Watch the video Eliminating Bacteria</p> <p>Practice: Use different fruit/vegetables for children to observe and distinguish fresh fruit/vegetables from spoiled ones. After observing, children select fresh, non-bruised fruit/vegetables to eat. Remove any bruised, spoiled, or rotten produce</p> <p>Play games: such as grocery shopping, cooking, and coloring. Use real fruit for children to sort into fresh/edible and spoiled categories</p> <p>Discuss with children: Ask questions to explore their experiences at home</p> <p>Integration: Incorporate this activity into lessons on exploring plants and animals, nutrition, and health care during lunch and snack times (Preschool Education Program)</p> <p>Parent engagement: Encourage parents to involve children in cooking at home. Let children observe and help sort vegetables and fruits into fresh and spoiled categories</p> <p>Let children observe parents checking whether chicken/meat is thoroughly cooked, fish is cooked or undercooked</p>	<p>Watch the video Eliminating Bacteria from 9:40 to 14:52:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-4SozASM-sTo&t=25s)</p> <p>Additional materials: Material 2 - Coloring and storytelling resources</p>

2.2. Guidelines for integrating food safety into preschool education programs

For preschool teachers, incorporating food safety education into topics and areas of child education in daily activities should be carried out flexibly and creatively.

2.2.1. Integrating food safety into various topics

Teachers can integrate food safety contents into familiar topics that children are learning. During activities, the learning through play method should be applied to convey the 5 food safety principles across all lessons. For example:

- **Self and health nutrition:** Teachers emphasize the principle of KEEPING CLEAN. Explain that following this principle helps maintain good health. Guide children to wash their hands before eating as an example of keeping clean. Teach them not to eat spoiled, stale, or moldy food.



- **Occupations:** Teachers can introduce children to the responsibilities of classroom teachers and kitchen staff, who must adhere to the 5 food safety principles: Keeping Clean, Separating Raw and Cooked Foods, Cooking Thoroughly, Storing at Safe Temperatures, and Using Safe Water. Teachers may ask questions and encourage discussion, for example:

“What must a teacher do before serving rice to ensure bacteria do not get into the food?” (Answer: wash hands and wear gloves while serving food).



- **Family:** Incorporate messages about the 5 food safety principles, particularly in family dining activities. For example, after meals, the dining table should be cleaned, and hands should be washed with soap before and after using the restroom. Teachers should encourage children to share the Journey of Bacteria story with their parents. In this topic, teachers should emphasize the message of gender equality in household chores: Household tasks are the responsibility of





all family members, regardless of gender, male or female. Everyone - father, mother, sons, and daughters - must be involved in these tasks. When children engage in play activities such as Cooking, Cleaning the Dining Table, or Grocery Shopping, teachers should ensure both boys and girls take on roles equally. This reinforces the message of equality within families.

- **Animals:** Apply the principles of Keeping Clean and Cooking Thoroughly. Integrate messages about how bacteria from animals can cause diseases in humans. Therefore, it is necessary to wash hands immediately after playing with animals (e.g., dogs, cats, chickens). Explain that harmful bacteria can enter the human body through unclean hands.



- **Plants:** Children learn to recognize different types of vegetables and fruits. Teachers can apply the principle of “Using Safe Water” to teach children to wash fruits and vegetables under running water to ensure safety and prevent stomachaches or diarrhea. Children can

practice washing fruits under running water (using real items or simulations). When studying the topic of vegetables/fruits, teachers can use real objects to help children distinguish between two groups: Fresh and safe-to-eat vegetables/fruits. Wilted, bruised, or unsafe vegetables/fruits that should be discarded.

2.2.2. Integrating food safety into educational activities

- **Cognitive development:** Teachers can organize science exploration sessions related to food safety topics such as “Bacteria and the Journey of Bacteria” or “Food Storage in Refrigerators” (refer to Appendix 3 and Appendix 7). Alternatively, activities to explore food can be held, allowing children to examine the colors, shapes, and quality of various fruits and vegetables. Through games that identify good food vs bad food, children will learn to recognize safe food (refer to Appendix 8 and Material 2: Supplemental lesson content for preschool teachers).
- **Language development:** During vocabulary or storytelling lessons, teachers can share stories related to food and food safety. Poems and songs about hygiene in eating and food storage can also help children absorb knowledge more easily.
- **Physical development:** During physical activities, teachers can organize movement-based games related to food, such as sorting safe and unsafe foods. Children can also practice actions like washing hands and preparing simple meals under the teacher’s supervision.

- **Emotional and social development:** Teachers can emphasize the importance of sharing and helping friends during meals while fostering awareness of community health. Through group activities such as organizing safe meals for classmates, children will learn to care about their own health and the well-being of others.

2.2.3. Integrating food safety into daily routines

Arrival and dismissal times

- After each food safety lesson, during arrival time, teachers can engage children in conversations, asking what they observed their parents doing at home during cooking, before eating, and after eating (e.g., washing vegetables/fruit, discarding wilted or spoiled produce, washing hands before meals, wiping the dining table before and after meals). This not only reinforces food safety knowledge but also supports language development.
- At dismissal time, teachers should remind children to continue observing their family's meal-related activities and share their findings with the class the next day.
- Encourage children to share with their parents what they learned in class and remind family members to adopt healthy behaviors (such as washing hands, cleaning the dining table, and properly separating raw and cooked foods in the refrigerator - refer to Appendix 4, Appendix 5, and Appendix 7).

Corner activities/outdoor play

- Through family life role-playing games, children can practice and reinforce their food safety knowledge and skills. For example, when children play the role of a homemaker and go shopping with reusable bags/basket, guide them to separate raw and cooked foods into different containers. Raw food container and coked food container.
- Teachers should use real vegetables/fruit for play activities such as "Selling Groceries", "Shopping", and "Cooking". Children can practice tasks like trimming roots, discarding wilted leaves, wrapping food, sealing containers, and organizing RAW and COOKED food storage in a refrigerator. They can also simulate activities like cooking, washing fruits, and cleaning the dining table before serving meals.

Note: To promote gender equality, teachers should emphasize the message that household tasks involve everyone - both parents and siblings without distinguishing between tasks for boys and girls. During role-play activities like cooking or family scenarios, both boys and girls should be encouraged to participate equally and assume diverse roles. Similarly, in group activities like construction or selling groceries, both boys and girls should be equally involved



Eating, sleeping, and personal hygiene activities

- These activities help children develop daily routines and habits while ensuring they feel comfortable. Teachers should observe children's handwashing practices, remind them to follow the correct steps, and explain the importance of washing hands properly in six steps. Children should be reminded to wash their hands after using the toilet and to use hygiene tools correctly, reinforcing their personal hygiene skills.
- Teachers can observe and integrate table-cleaning activities before and after meals by assigning children to take turns as table monitors (the focus is not on how well they clean but on fostering the habit and awareness of maintaining cleanliness before and after meals).
- Children should be introduced to common types of food, recognize dishes made from these ingredients, and understand their health benefits. They should be encouraged to eat a variety of fruits and only consume those that have been thoroughly washed to stay healthy.

Afternoon activities

- Allow children to color and draw images related to washing fruit, washing hands, and different types of fruit.
- Encourage children to assemble puzzles or sequence pictures illustrating the steps of handwashing.

- Have children classify raw and cooked foods using prepared images. Show video clips about how bacteria spread to reinforce the message of controlling harmful bacteria.
- Read or tell stories related to food safety education (Reference: Document 2).
- Let children engage in role-playing activities within groups or creatively retell stories based on their understanding of food safety practices (teachers can guide discussions using images from the video clips)
- Provide hands-on activities where children practice sorting raw and cooked foods, packaging them, and organizing them in the refrigerator.

Note: When showing videos about bacteria, use fun and engaging clips rather than ones that might scare children. Teachers should encourage all children (both boys and girls) to participate in games related to family roles, cooking, and food safety education. Use gender-neutral terms such as "household cook" instead of "housewife" and "person cooking" instead of "mom cooking"

Key messages to emphasize during activities:

- Household chores are not divided by gender (male - female)
- Cooking and housework are responsibilities shared by all family members.

2.2.4. Extracurricular activities and food safety experiences

Preschool-aged children are naturally curious, eager to learn, and enjoy participating in hands-on experiences. Schools and teachers are encouraged to organize extracurricular activities that provide children with practical learning opportunities. Remember, any moment can be an opportunity to teach about food safety. Repeating the five principles of food safety consistently is essential. Incorporate these lessons during special occasions such as the Full-moon mid-autumn festival, Lunar New Year, holidays, or the start of the picnic season.

a. Kitchen tours and observing kitchen staff activities

When teaching occupational topics, teachers should organize visits for children to observe kitchen staff performing tasks aligned with the five food safety principles (i.e. keep clean; separate; cook thoroughly; store safely; use clean water). Since it may not be possible for children to observe all kitchen processes in one session, teachers should create specific plans to cover different tasks on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on the content. For example: washing fruit/vegetables; washing hands before food preparation; storing milk in the refrigerator, etc. For schools unable to accommodate in-person tours (due to limited kitchen space), teachers or school staff can record video clips of kitchen activities (such as washing vegetables/fruit, cleaning dishes, preparing meat/fish, and cooking, etc.). These videos can be shown to children, followed by discussions in a “virtual tour” format.

For teachers, in addition to organizing educational activities, teachers are responsible for managing children’s meals (including picking up meals, serving and supervising during mealtimes). Teachers should always wash their hands before handling food and wear gloves while serving meals to children.

b. Visiting a market or supermarket

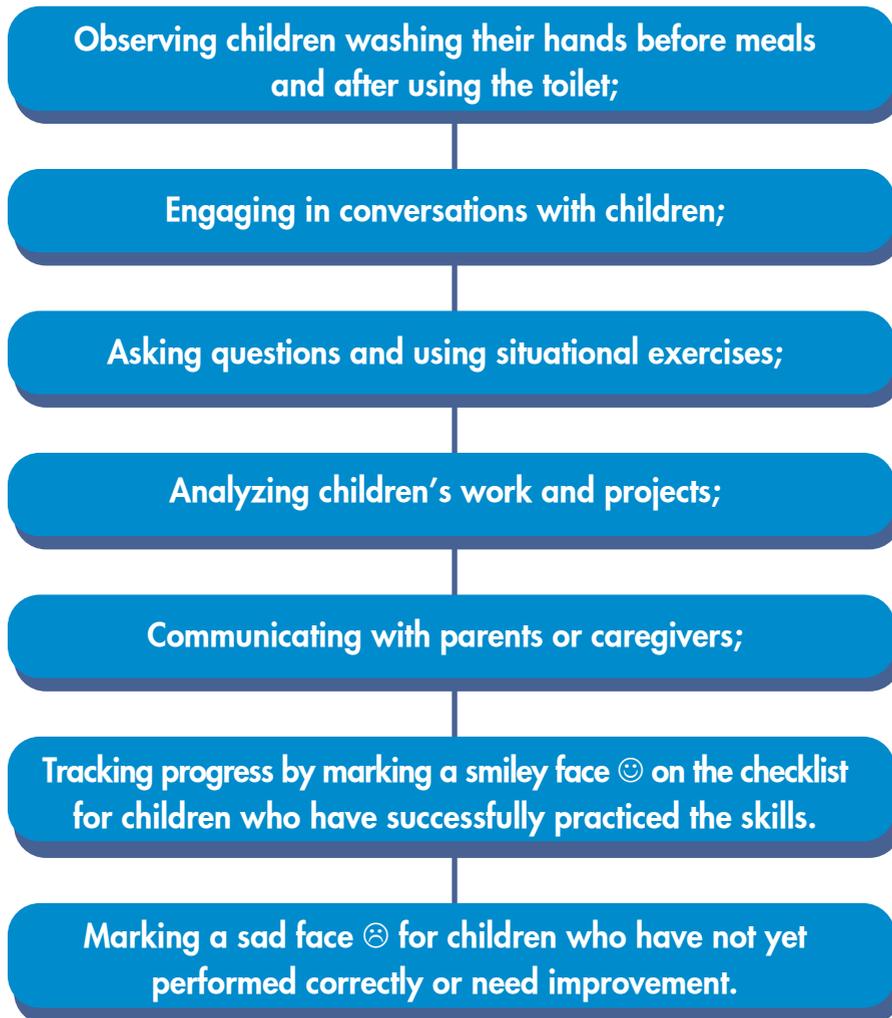
Visiting a market can be more challenging, so teachers should develop a specific plan outlining the key activities for observation. For example, since markets have a wide variety of food stalls, children can observe different sections and learn to distinguish fresh produce, raw food, and RTE food.

Teachers should divide children into groups and assign each group a specific task (for example: Group 1: Observe the meat stall; Group 2: Observe the fish/shrimp stall; Group 3: Observe the vegetable stall; Group 4: Observe the fruit stall). After the visit, teachers should organize a discussion session where children can share their observations. Reinforcing food safety messages during these discussions will help children retain key concepts for a longer time. In addition, teachers can record videos of market or supermarket activities and show them to the children during afternoon discussions.



2.2.5. Guidelines for assessing children's knowledge and basic behaviors on food safety

Teachers can assess children's understanding of food safety principles and their proficiency in related skills through the following methods:





PART 3

Recommendations for school administrations on food safety education

The management of food safety practices in schools must comply with the current regulations set by the Government of Vietnam. This section provides some recommendations for school administrators on food safety education.

- **Enhancing the capacity of staff and teachers in food safety practices:** Ensure that caregivers and teachers are fully aware of the importance of food safety. Schools should establish an annual training plan for staff and teachers on the fun fundamentals of food safety.
- **Developing a food safety education plan for preschoolers and integrating it flexibly into the school's general curriculum:** Food safety education should be incorporated throughout the school year or structured as dedicated topics. Lessons should be designed based on the five key principles of food safety (*keep clean, separate, cook properly, store at a safe temperature, and use clean water*). School administrators should thoroughly understand food safety principles and apply *learning through play* methods to guide teachers in integrating food safety education into weekly/monthly/yearly lesson plans. They should also supervise and support teachers through classroom observations, professional development meetings, and by encouraging creativity in lesson planning. Schools are encouraged to refer to food safety education materials developed by the SAFEGRO program, which have been reviewed by both national and international experts in food safety and designed to be age-appropriate for preschoolers.
- **Strengthening collaboration with local healthcare facilities and local authorities in implementing food safety measures:** Schools should encourage parental involvement in monitoring and supporting food safety education and implementation in schools.
- **Food quality inspection/check:** Ensure regular inspections/checking of the quality of food supplied to schools.
- **Hygiene and sanitation:** Ensure that all surfaces, utensils, and food storage containers are properly cleaned and sanitized to prevent the spread of bacteria and other contaminants.
- **Food preparation:** Ensure that all food is prepared safely and cooked at appropriate temperatures to eliminate harmful bacteria. Leftovers should be properly stored and fully reheated before serving again.
- **Compliance with government food safety standards in schools:** The government has established guidelines for the safe processing, storage, and handling of food. Schools must adhere to these guidelines to minimize the risk of food contamination.

Raising awareness of food safety and ensuring compliance with food safety practices will help protect children from illnesses and foodborne risks, such as food poisoning. When food safety requirements are met, schools can create a safe learning and development environment for children.



PART 4

Collaborating with parents to guide children in basic food safety practices at home

To develop children's food safety skills, preschools need to closely collaborate with parents. Below are several measures that preschools can implement to establish a strong connection and consistency between school and home in educating children about food safety.

4.1 Sharing with parents about food safety

Preschools can hold regular parent meetings or special workshops focused on food safety. These sessions can be conducted by the school or with invited food safety experts to share insights on:

The importance of food safety for children's development;

Basic principles in selecting, storing, and preparing safe food;

Essential hygiene habits before eating and when handling food.

Parent meetings also provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions and discuss how to apply these measures at home.

4.2 Distributing flyers and food safety guides

The school can provide flyers, educational materials, or e-newsletters for parents to gain a better understanding of basic food safety knowledge. The content of these materials may include:

- Principles for selecting clean and safe food.
- Proper food storage methods to prevent spoilage and contamination.
- Hygienic food preparation and cooking practices.
- Good hygiene habits, such as washing hands before eating, keeping utensils clean, and wiping down dining tables/kitchen counters before handling/meals.

4.3 Organizing extracurricular activities with parental participation

The school can organize extracurricular activities such as visits to farms, supermarkets, or clean food production facilities. Parents and children can participate together to apply the knowledge learned. Through these hands-on experiences, children will gain a clearer understanding of safe food production processes, while parents also acquire valuable knowledge.



4.4 Establishing regular communication channels with parents

Schools are encouraged to maintain regular communication with parents through various channels such as Zalo, email, the school's fan page, or pupil communication books. Teachers can share lessons, photos, or videos of children practicing food safety activities at school with parents. This allows parents to stay informed about the school's content and requirements, enabling them to continue guiding their children at home.

4.5 Developing good habits at home

Schools and teachers should encourage parents to establish food safety and hygiene habits for children within the family. Some activities parents can engage in with their children include:

- Washing hands before eating and after using the restroom.
- Selecting food together and teaching children to distinguish between fresh and spoiled fruits and vegetables.
- Involving children in meal preparation tasks such as washing fruits and vegetables, setting the table, wrapping food, and storing leftovers in the refrigerator.

Practicing these skills at home allows children to apply the knowledge learned at school to their daily lives.

4.6 Encouraging parents to participate in nutritional meal planning

Preschools should share their nutritional meal plans with parents, encouraging them to apply similar principles at home while

ensuring variety in meals. This prevents children from feeling bored due to repetitive meals and creates consistency between school and home menus. Additionally, parents gain a better understanding of a healthy and safe diet for their children.

4.7 Organizing competitions or interactive family activities

Schools can organize competitions or interactive activities related to food safety that involve the whole family. Examples include a safe family cooking contest, drawing competitions on food safety, or storytelling about hygiene practices during festivals such as the Full-Moon Mid-Autumn Festival or the Lunar New Year. These events provide an excellent opportunity to reinforce food safety principles in an engaging way. Parents' participation in these activities helps reinforce food safety messages for both children and parents. Depending on each school's conditions, these competitions can be adapted to a suitable scale.

4.8 Evaluating children's progress and providing regular feedback to parents

Teachers should regularly assess children's progress in practicing food safety and provide feedback to parents. These discussions allow parents to track their child's development and make necessary adjustments or provide additional support in educating them at home.

By implementing these measures, preschools and parents can collaborate effectively to create a consistent learning environment for children to develop food safety habits from an early age. This not only helps children form healthy habits but also contributes to their long-term well-being.



References

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4. Duong Ngoc Van - “Four Essential Nutrient Groups for a Healthy Body”, dated 12/9/2022, by MEDLATEC General Hospital;
5. The Law on Education - Law No. 43/2019/QH14 dated 14/6/2019;
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9. PM Decision No. 2/QĐ-TTg dated 5/1/2022 regarding granting approval to the “National Strategy on Food Safety for the 2021-2030 period, with a Vision to 2045”.
10. Vietnam Women’s Union Journal – “Food Groups Providing Fats, Starch, Vitamins, and Minerals” dated 16/6/2009.
11. The Partnership for Food Safety Education – FightBAC.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Basis for developing this document

1. Summary of current programs and policies on food safety in educational institutions

- PM Decision No. 41/QĐ-TTg dated 8/1/2019 regarding “Ensuring Proper Nutrition and Enhancing Physical Activity for Children, Pupils, and Students for the 2018-2025 period”;
- PM Decision No. 1660/QĐ-TTg dated 2/10/2021 regarding granting approval to the “School Health Program for the 2021-2025 period”;
- PM Decision No. 2/QĐ-TTg dated 5/2/2022 regarding granting approval to the “National Nutrition Strategy for the 2021-2030 period, with a Vision to 2045”;
- MOET Circular No. 52/2020/TT-BGDĐT dated 31/12/2020 regarding issuance of the Regulations on Preschool Institutions. Article 28, Clause 3: “Ensuring children’s safety in eating and daily activities at school. Compliance with food safety and hygiene regulations in food preparation for children, ensuring no food poisoning occurs”;
- MOH Circular No. 46/2010/TT-BYT dated 20/12/2010 regarding issuance of the National Technical Regulations on Hygiene for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases in Educational Institutions (Chapter IV, Section 5).
- Inter-ministerial Circular No. 13/2016/TTLT-BYT-BGDĐT dated 12/5/2016 regarding regulations on school health management (Article 6).
- MOET Minister’s Decision No. 2195/QĐ-BGDĐT dated 10/8/2022 regarding granting approval to the *Guidelines on Organizing School Meals in Combination with Enhancing Physical Activity for Children and Pupils in Preschool and Primary Education Institutions*.
- 2016 Recommended Nutritional Requirements for Vietnamese People - Issued by the National Institute of Nutrition.

2. Summary of objectives, contents, methods, and perspectives on developing the Preschool Education Program by MOET

- The goal of preschool education is to help children develop holistically, forming foundational personality traits. It aims to cultivate essential competencies and life skills appropriate for their age, awakening and maximizing their potential to prepare them for future education and lifelong learning.



- The educational content must be scientifically based and ensure continuity across different age groups, from daycare to kindergarten and primary school. It should align educational content with real-life experiences, connecting to children’s daily lives and prior experiences. The content should be appropriate for children’s psychological and physiological development, balancing nurturing, care, and education. Food safety education is also a crucial component that aligns with the Preschool Education Program.
- The child-centered education approach is emphasized, recognizing each child’s unique characteristics. Children engage in hands-on experiences, exploration, and discovery of their surroundings through various “learning-through-play and play-while-learning activities”. The program focuses on innovating the educational environment to stimulate and create opportunities for children to actively explore, experiment, and be creative in a joyful setting.
- Perspective: The preschool Education Program is designed as a framework with flexibility, allowing preschools and teachers to select and supplement educational content. This approach enables them to implement educational plans that suit preschool children and local conditions.



Appendix 2:

Food safety principles

Basic principles for ensuring food safety

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are five (5) fundamental principles to ensure food safety:

1. Keep clean: Wash hands thoroughly before, during, and after food preparation, after handling food, and after exposure to potential contaminants (e.g., after using the restroom, handling money, or touching dirty objects) and before eating. Clean all food storage and preparation utensils, maintain kitchen hygiene, and ensure the cooking area and food are free from insects and animals.

2. Separate raw and cooked food: Meat, poultry, and fish/seafood should be stored in tightly sealed containers and kept separate from other food. In the refrigerator, foods should be arranged in order of risk level, with high-risk foods placed on the lowest shelf to prevent cross-contamination in case of leakage. Raw and cooked foods should be stored in different compartments when preserved.

3. Cook thoroughly: Animal-based foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and seafood must be fully cooked to ensure that harmful bacteria are eliminated through heat. Properly cooked food should show clear separation of fish bones, transparent meat juices when cut, no pink color in the meat fibers, and firm egg yolks. For liquid foods such as porridge and soup, they should be boiled evenly for at least 3 minutes. Cooked food should be stored at appropriate temperatures and reheated before consumption to ensure thorough cooking (the thickest part of the food should reach the required temperature).

4. Store food at safe temperatures: At room temperature, bacteria can multiply and grow rapidly. If food is stored at temperatures below 5°C or above 60°C, bacterial growth slows down or stops, reducing the risk of foodborne illness.

5. Use clean water and safe raw ingredients: Food ingredients and water can contain physical, chemical, and biological hazards. To ensure a safe meal, only use water that meets the National Standard QCVN 01-1:2018/BYT issued by the Ministry of Health for food processing. Food should have clear origins, come from reliable suppliers, and include a commitment to food safety compliance.



Appendix 3: Bacteria and the pathways of pathogenic bacteria into the human body

1. What are bacteria?

Bacteria are microscopic, single-celled organisms that are invisible to the naked eye and can only be seen under a microscope. The head of a pin can hold up to a million bacteria.

2. Where are bacteria found?

Bacteria are the most abundant group of organisms in the natural world. They exist everywhere - in soil, water, even in radioactive waste and hot springs. Some bacteria live in symbiosis (causing no harm to the host), such as the beneficial bacteria in the digestive systems of humans and animals. Others are parasitic (harmful to the host), such as pathogenic bacteria that cause diseases in humans and animals. In the school environment, bacteria can be found on tools, desks, chairs, learning materials, and toys.

3. What types of bacteria exist?

Bacteria can be classified in many ways. Based on their effects on humans, they can be grouped into four categories:

- **Beneficial bacteria:** These bacteria are used in the production of fermented foods such as yogurt, cheese, and pickled vegetables.
- **Neutral bacteria:** These bacteria are neither beneficial nor harmful to humans. Thousands of bacterial strains fall into this category, playing an essential role in maintaining the natural balance. Eliminating all bacteria would be disastrous for the world. To protect public health and prevent economic losses, measures are taken to control and eliminate pathogenic bacteria and those that cause food spoilage at every stage of the food production chain.
- **Unwanted bacteria:** These bacteria cause food to rot and spoil.
- **Harmful bacteria:** These bacteria cause diseases in humans and animals.

4. How do bacteria enter the human body?

Bacteria can enter the human body through various pathways, such as ingestion, the respiratory system, direct contact, etc. However, this document only focuses specifically on bacterial entry through the oral route. There are two main ways bacteria can enter the body through the mouth:

- Contaminated food and water - Consuming food and beverages that carry pathogens (bacteria-contaminated food).
- Unwashed or improperly washed hands - Handling food or eating with dirty hands allows bacteria to transfer from surfaces to the mouth.

(Foodborne illness/food poisoning is commonly caused by three types of hazards: physical, chemical, and biological. Biological hazards include bacteria, viruses, parasites, and molds. Among food poisoning cases, approximately 50%-60% are caused by bacteria. In this document, we focus specifically on bacteria affecting preschool children.)

Appendix 4: Handwashing with soap

1. When should you wash your hands?

- Before eating;
- After using the restroom;
- After sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue or handkerchief;
- After any cleaning activities such as sweeping, mopping, or wiping tables;
- After touching dirty objects;
- After playing with pets.

2. Steps for proper handwashing

Step 1: Wet both hands with water, apply soap to your palms, and rub your palms together;

Step 2: Rub one palm over the back of the other hand and between the fingers, then switch hands;

Step 3: Rub both palms together, ensuring to scrub between the fingers;

Step 4: Scrub the backs of your fingers against the opposite palm (knuckles touching the palm);

Step 5: Rub the thumb of one hand inside the palm of the other hand and vice versa (the palm should grip the thumb).

Step 6: Rub the fingertips of one hand against the palm of the other hand and vice versa. Rinse hands thoroughly under running water up to the wrists and dry them.

Turn off the faucet using a clean towel or paper towel. Dispose of the paper towel in a trash bin. (If washing hands in a restroom) Use a paper towel to open the door when exiting.

Notes:

- The total scrubbing time (palms, backs of hands, fingers) should be at least 30 seconds.
- Dry hands using a clean towel or disposable paper towel.





Appendix 5: Washing fruit under running water

1. Why is it necessary to wash fruits under running water?

- *Effectively removing bacteria and chemicals:* Washing under running water helps remove bacteria, dirt, pesticides, and other chemicals more effectively. As the water flows, contaminants and bacteria are washed away instead of lingering on the fruit's surface, as they might when washing in a basin.
- *Preventing cross-contamination:* When washing fruit in a basin, bacteria and impurities from one fruit can transfer to others, leading to cross-contamination. Running water continuously rinses away contaminants, reducing this risk.
- *Maintaining water cleanliness:* Washing multiple fruits in the same basin quickly makes the water dirty, reducing its cleaning effectiveness. In contrast, running water remains clean, ensuring better sanitation.
- *Removing pesticide residues:* Many pesticides and protective chemicals can adhere to the surface of fruit. Washing under running water helps eliminate these substances more effectively than soaking them in a basin.
- *Convenient and easy to do:* Washing under running water not only ensures better cleanliness but is also quick and convenient, especially when washing large quantities of fruit.

2. Preparation

- Prepare a clean basket to hold the fruit.
- Roll up your sleeves to avoid getting them wet.
- Wash your hands thoroughly, following the instructions in Section 3.

3. Steps for washing fruit

- Place the fruit under running cold water.
- Gently rub the fruit with your hands to remove any dirt or residue from the surface.

For fruit with hard skin: Use a brush (designated specifically for fruit washing) to scrub the surface thoroughly.

For delicate, water-rich fruit (such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, etc.): Place the berries in a strainer and rinse them under running cold water. Gently move your hands over the berries while lightly shaking the strainer to help remove dirt. Once clean, shake off excess water and let them drain.

For grapes: Place them in a strainer and rinse under running cold water. Turn and toss the grapes to ensure all surfaces are properly rinsed. Shake off excess water and allow them to air dry naturally.

Appendix 6: Cleaning the dining table before and after meals

1. Why is it important to clean the dining table and kitchen counter before and after meals?

- Prevent the spread of bacteria and viruses
- Maintain hygiene and cleanliness
- Prevent allergies and unwanted reactions
- Encourage good habits and discipline
- Protect the surface of the dining table

2. Cleaning the table before meals

- Prepare a clean cloth.
- Remove any unnecessary items from the table.
- Wash hands thoroughly following the instructions in Section 3.
- Wipe the table surface in a zigzag motion twice to ensure cleanliness.

3. Cleaning the table after meals

- Prepare two clean, soft, dry cloths and mild dish soap.
- Remove all items from the table, including placemats, dishes, and decorations.
- Use a dry cloth to remove food crumbs and debris from the table surface.
- Prepare a cleaning solution by mixing a few drops of mild dish soap with warm water.
- Dip a cloth into the soapy water, wring out excess liquid, and wipe the table surface in a zigzag motion until clean. For stubborn stains, use a soft-bristle brush. If the table is wooden, wipe along the grain to protect the surface and avoid soaking the wood with too much liquid.
- Rinse the cloth with clean water, wring out excess liquid, and wipe the table again to remove soap residue.
- Use the second dry cloth to dry the table completely.



Appendix 7: Food storage in the refrigerator

Properly organizing food in the refrigerator helps maintain food safety, extend shelf life, and optimize storage space.

1. Storing food in the freezer

Foods not intended for immediate use can be stored in the freezer to prolong their shelf life. If the refrigerator has only one freezer compartment, do not store ice cream, ice cubes, and raw fresh foods together in the same space.

If the freezer has multiple compartments, arrange food as follows:

- *Top compartment:* Store ice cream, frozen meals, packaged foods such as sausages, pizza, and other RTE items for easy access.
- *Middle compartment:* Store cooked and prepared food in airtight containers or freezer bags.
- *Bottom compartment:* Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood in sealed containers or freezer bags to prevent contamination.

2. Storing food in the refrigerator (chiller section)

- *Top shelf:* Store RTE foods such as leftovers, cooked foods, beverages, and liquid dairy products in sealed containers. These items are less likely to drip and contaminate other foods.
- *Middle shelf:* Store dairy products such as cheese, butter, and eggs (washed beforehand). These items should be kept in the coldest part of the fridge but not in the door, where the temperature fluctuates. Fruit can also be stored here, but they should be kept in sealed containers or bags.
- *Bottom shelf:* Store raw meat, poultry, and fish in sealed containers to prevent leakages onto other food, which could cause cross-contamination.
- *Vegetable drawer:* Store vegetables in the high-humidity drawer to keep them fresh and prevent drying out.
- *Door shelves:* Store fruit juices, drinking water, and condiments.

Appendix 8: Identifying safe (edible) and spoiled food

1. Identifying fresh and spoiled fruit/vegetables

a. Characteristics of fresh, edible fruit/vegetables

- **Color and texture:** Fresh produce typically has vibrant, natural colors. For example, fresh leafy greens are bright green, and ripe strawberries range from pinkish-red to deep red. Fruit/vegetables should be firm, with no bruises or dark spots. For instance, carrots should be firm and crisp, while apples should be dense. The skin should be intact, without significant blemishes, wrinkles, or soft spots.
- **Smell:** Fresh produce has a pleasant, natural aroma. For example, fresh herbs should have their characteristic fragrance, citrus fruits should have a fresh citrus scent, and pineapples should have their distinct sweet aroma.
- **Weight:** Fresh produce tends to feel heavier for its size due to its water content. For example, fresh cucumbers and oranges should feel dense and heavy.

b. Characteristics of spoiled fruit/vegetables

- **Color and texture:** Spoiled produce often appears dull, faded, or turns brown. For example, lettuce may become brown and wilted, while bananas may develop large brown patches. Spoiled fruit/vegetables tend to be mushy or excessively soft. For example, tomatoes may become overly soft and watery. The skin may show signs of wrinkling, excessive bruising, or mold growth. Mold can appear as fuzzy white, blue, or green patches on berries and other fruits.
- **Smell:** Spoiled produce often emits a sour, musty, or unpleasant odor. For example, rotten potatoes may have a moldy or sour smell.
- **Weight:** Spoiled produce may feel lighter than expected due to water loss. For example, a spoiled cucumber may feel light and rubbery.

2. Identifying edible and spoiled cooked food

a. Signs of edible cooked food

- **Color:** The color should be characteristic of the dish, without any unusual discoloration. For example, cooked chicken should be white or light brown (not red), and vegetables should retain their naturally vibrant color. The texture should be similar to when the food was freshly cooked. For example, rice should be soft and slightly sticky, not hard or mushy;



meat should be tender but not overly dry or tough; and baked goods should maintain their original shape.

- **Smell:** Edible cooked food retains a pleasant aroma. It should smell the same as when it was freshly prepared. For example, a stew should still have its rich, appetizing scent.
- **Taste:** The taste should remain unchanged from when it was first cooked. There should be no sour, bitter, or unusual flavors.
- **Storage duration:** In general, cooked food can be stored in the refrigerator for 3-4 days. If it has been stored for longer, carefully check for signs of spoilage. Cooked food stored in the freezer can last longer (typically 2-3 months for optimal quality), but it should be checked for freezer burn or other quality changes.

b. Signs of spoiled cooked food

- **Color:** Spoiled food may show unusual discoloration, such as gray, green, or brown shades that were not present initially. For example, rice may turn gray, and meat may develop green or brown spots. Spoiled food often has a different texture than when it was freshly cooked. It may become slimy, excessively dry, or mushy. For example, rice may become sticky or slimy, and baked goods may turn soggy.
- **Smell:** Spoiled cooked food often has a sour, rancid, or otherwise unpleasant odor. For example, spoiled cooked meat may have a rotten smell, while dairy-based dishes may develop a sour odor. Baked goods may also emit a sour smell.
- **Taste:** Spoiled food often has an unusual, sour, or bitter taste. If you taste even a small bite and it seems off, it is best to discard it.
- **Mold:** Any visible mold growth is a clear sign that the food has spoiled and should be discarded. Mold can appear as fuzzy spots in various colors, such as white, green, blue, or black.

Note:

- Teach children to avoid consuming deep-fried foods frequently, as they may contribute to obesity and cardiovascular issues.
- Avoid eating street food from unknown sources that do not meet food safety standards.



SAFE FOOD FOR GROWTH PROJECT



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