



Food safety is everyone's business in schools and daycare centres

The importance of food safety

Safe, nutritious and diverse food in childhood is one of the key ingredients to deliver a world where children are free from all forms of malnutrition. Children under five years of age bear 40 percent of the foodborne disease burden and are at a higher risk of malnutrition and mortality due to unsafe food; 149 million have short height for their age; 45 million have low weight for their height. When food is not safe, nutritional goals cannot be achieved.

Food safety contributes to healthy growth and development in children. Therefore, schools, daycare centres and other facilities are important settings to promote food safety. Schools should promote food safety in the cafeteria as

part of their health programmes and start developing a food safety culture for students at a young age, helping to create a new generation of healthy consumers.

Although distribution modalities of school meals may vary – from canteens with hot or cold meals prepared in a kitchen onsite managed by the school staff or external catering company to canteens managed by parents or limited meal service or snacks – the handling process of food served in schools and daycare centres must comply with food safety requirements.



What are the benefits of food safety?

SHORT-TERM BENEFITS

Health: children fall sick less often and are in better health in general;

Developmental: reduced lethargy and better concentration;

Economic: lower health expenditures and lower childcare costs.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Health: improved well-being and better physical growth;

Developmental: improved school performance due to better cognitive ability and lower absenteeism;

Economic: higher work productivity and earning potential in adult life.

How to improve food safety

SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

Meet regulatory food safety requirements in food halls and cafeterias by:

- having a food safety supervisor with the training, skills and knowledge to ensure that all regulations are followed, such as hand washing with clean water before handling food;
- ensuring a food safety management programme is set up, such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and meets local requirements.

Provide food safety training to all staff and parents involved in meal preparation and service.

Include food safety in food literacy curricula to ensure food safety is embedded in social norms as children grow and develop.

Promote the use of **WHO's Five Keys to Safer Food** by teachers and students.

TEACHERS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Ensure children wash their hands with soap and clean water before and after consuming food and after going to the bathroom.

Reach out and involve families in food safety protocols by sharing information about how to correctly store food brought from home.

Teach children early about how to prepare and handle food safely. This equips young people with knowledge and habits for later in life.

Hold a World Food Safety Day activity on or around 7 June. Involve students in food safety activities at schools, youth centres or youth events. This way young people can learn about food safety and share important knowledge with families.