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Measures to Ensure Safe Food Delivery in Community Kitchens

*Guidelines for food handling, preparation and
distribution during COVID-19*



World Food
Programme

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Maintaining food safety and hygiene in Community Kitchens during COVID-19

COVID-19 is a great cause of concern globally and requires immediate actions to prevent its spread within communities. As of now, it is evident that the transmission of the disease is through direct human-to-human proximity or indirectly through contaminated surfaces.

It is highly unlikely that people can contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging as it is a respiratory illness and the primary transmission route is through person-to-person contact and through direct contact with respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

There is still no evidence that viruses which cause respiratory illnesses being transmitted via food or food packaging. Coronaviruses cannot multiply in food; they need an animal or human host to multiply.

However, it is still important for the industry, workers involved in community kitchens and other facilities to practice the high level of food safety and hygiene practices.

This document is based on the recent evidence and both national and global guidelines from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and presents procedures that should be followed in community kitchens.

I. Guidance for staff engaged in preparing/ cooking of food:

1.1 Personal hygiene:

- Cooks should maintain the personal hygiene:
 - * Take a bath and wash hair every day.
 - * Wear clean clothes every day.
 - * Keep nails short.
 - * Wash hands with soap after every 20 minutes, for 20-30 seconds.
 - * Wash hands with soap after using the toilets.
 - * Do not touch face, hair, eyes while cooking. In case touched, hands should be washed immediately with soap for at least 20-30 seconds.
- Cooks should not be allowed to cook if he/she is suffering from cough, fever and sneezing.
- Cooks to maintain respiratory etiquettes, i.e., do not sneeze in open, cover your mouth with a hanky or arms if you sneeze, do not talk while handling, preparing and serving food.

1.2 Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Cooks should wear an apron, head gear, and face mask, while cooking. If handmade face covers are used, ensure they are washed daily.
- Avoid shaking hands or hugging
- Assign one person per task in the kitchen: such as a designated person for preparation, one for cooking, and another for serving.
- Wherever possible, perform kitchen activities at appropriate distances e.g., there should be defined separations for raw material procurement area, drinking water storage, cutting of vegetables and cleaning of grains/pulses, cooking area, cooked food area.
- Maintaining a maximum possible distance between two persons working in kitchen at one point of time.
- The cooks shall work with their faces in the opposite direction to maintain social distance.
- Cooks should avoid bare hand contact while cooking and serving the food; use of gloves is encouraged.

1.3 Cleanliness and sanitation in kitchen and surroundings areas

- Location of the kitchen should be in a hygienic place, away from toilets, drainage etc
- Cooks should follow the "Clean as you go" principle to maintain hygiene in the kitchen.
- All kitchen utensils and devices should be washed and sun-dried before using. Preferably use hot water (above 60 degrees Celsius) for washing and sanitizing.
- Frequently clean and sanitize common areas and door handles. Clean the place with soap and water followed by disinfectant, prepared by 1% hypochlorite solution, or any other

disinfectant found to be effective against coronavirus.

- Do not spit inside or outside the kitchen.
- Wash dish cloths often in the warm water and store it in a clean container after sun drying.
- Hand sanitizer (60-70% alcohol) should be present at the wash basin for frequent hand cleaning by cooks to be used in absence of soap and water.
- Toilets should be cleaned frequently using water and detergent, followed with disinfection using 1 % hypochlorite solution. For metallic equipment and surfaces where bleach is not suitable, use 70% alcohol-based disinfectant.

1.4 Preventing Contamination

- Always keep raw/uncooked material and cooked food separately.
- Wash chopping board and knife with soap and water before using.
- Entry of animals/birds should be restricted through taking appropriate measures.
- Entry of any staff suffering from cough, cold or fever should be restricted.
- Cooked food should always be kept covered before serving

1.5 Retention of Nutrients

- Always use potable water for washing and cooking.
- The recipes that include seasonal fruits and vegetables are preferred.
- "Ek Vyanjan" recipes are the recipes where multiple ingredients are used for food preparation such as khichdi/tehri which is prepared by rice, dal, vegetables, soy chunks as such recipes have higher nutritive value and save time and energy.

II. Guidance for staff involved in procurement of raw materials:

2.1 Procurement of raw material

- Always follow the COVID-19 guidelines on social distancing while buying the raw material from shops.
- Buy the sealed packets of the food material after checking the 'Best Before' date and clean the packets with disinfectant once brought to the community kitchen
- Always wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly with 50 ppm chlorine (or equivalent solution) and clean potable water to remove the dirt and other contaminants.
- Clean/sanitise the outer package / cover of raw material and then transfer the material to the jars followed by washing of hands with soap.

III. Guidance for staff involved in distribution and serving of food:

3.1 Distribution or serving food

- The serving and dining area should also be well sanitized before and after food consumption with 0.5 % chlorine solution or 1 % hypochlorite solution.
- While serving food, encourage open air seating with social distancing of 1-2 m.
- There should not be any physical contact between staff and beneficiaries or objects such as food containers.
- Allocate specific areas for elderly, women, children and disabled people and distribute the food first to them.
- The staff distributing the food should wear personal protective equipment

such as hand gloves, face mask, head cover and shall maintain appropriate distance from the beneficiaries.

- The staff at distribution should perform hand sanitisation regularly.
- Social distancing for the food recipients can be achieved by clearly marking the allocated spaces at an appropriate distance to define the dining and serving area.
- Ensure that the beneficiaries depart soon from the distribution point after the collection of food.
- High touch points such as ladles, tongs, handles etc should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
- Request that all persons receiving the food have washed their hands properly with soap and water.

References

- *COVID-19 and food safety; guidance for food business: Interim guidance 7th April 2020, WHO & FAO*
- *Food Hygiene and safety guidelines for food business during coronavirus disease (CoVID-19) pandemic by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)*