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Applicability UNC Medical Center

Guidelines for Infection Prevention in Nutrition and Food Services

I. Description

This document describes important infection control guidelines followed by Nutrition and Food Services (NFS) to prevent food-related illnesses.

II. Rationale

Unsanitary food service can play a significant role in disease transmission. Maintenance of a sanitation standard is of paramount importance in medical care facilities. Prevention of infection in a food service department requires healthy staff, properly maintained equipment, uncontaminated supplies, and an ongoing awareness of proper sanitation and hygiene.

III. Policy

A. Staff

1. Staff should adhere to the Occupational Health Services policy: [Infection Prevention and Screening Program – Occupational Health Service](#).
2. Staff shall comply with all local, state, and federal laws governing food protection and sanitation of food establishments.
3. Staff should adhere to the Infection Prevention policy: [Hand Hygiene and Use of Antiseptics for Skin Preparation](#). Hand hygiene will be performed with soap and water before work, after using the toilet, before and after eating, after contact with unclean equipment, work surfaces, soiled clothing, washcloths, etc., and after handling raw

food. In patient care areas, an alcohol-based hand rub may be used (e.g., Purell) if hands are not visibly soiled. Adequate numbers of handwashing sinks with soap dispensers and single-use towels are provided.

- Staff may not clean their hands in a sink used for food preparation or ware washing.
4. NFS staff in direct contact with food will wear disposable gloves. Gloves should be removed upon leaving the work area and hand hygiene performed. When returning to the work area, hand hygiene should be performed, and new gloves worn. Gloves should be changed, and hands washed with soap and water whenever the gloves are contaminated by touching potentially soiled surfaces such as cashier surfaces, floors, trash cans, cardboard boxes, etc.
 5. Food service staff are required to report to their supervisor information about their health as it relates to diseases that are transmissible person-to-person, especially through food. Reportable symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, sore throat with fever, or lesions containing pus such as a boil or infected wound that is open or draining. Reportable diagnoses include Norovirus, Hepatitis A virus, *Shigella* spp., Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Salmonella*. Food service employees must be free of communicable diseases such as hepatitis A, skin lesions, boils, respiratory infections, or diarrhea. Staff with a suspected communicable disease should report to their supervisor and be cleared by the Occupational Health Service (OHS) before returning to work. It is the Supervisor's responsibility to observe staff daily to ensure compliance with this policy and to ensure staff are knowledgeable about reporting to OHS for known/suspected communicable disease.
 6. Proper attire for food handlers should include hair covering (hair net or cap, beard restraints) and freshly laundered, visibly clean outer clothing designed and worn to effectively prevent contamination of food, equipment, utensils, linens, and single-use items.
 7. Restrooms should be conveniently located near the department and should not open directly into food service areas.
 8. Education on infection prevention and control practices are presented by department educators or Infection Prevention staff as needed and documented. Basic orientation for all new NFS staff should include personal hygiene, sanitation, hand hygiene, and isolation precautions) and when to notify their supervisor and OHS of illness with an infectious disease. Training should be based on all applicable policies.

B. Patients

1. Food Service to All Patients
 - a. Staff need to be familiar with isolation precautions signage and follow all guidelines within the Infection Prevention policy: [Isolation Precautions](#).

- b. Leftover food will be discarded.
 - c. NFS staff are responsible for clearing the bedside table, serving the food tray to the patient, and removing the tray at the completion of the meal. Hand hygiene should be performed prior to entering and after leaving each patient room. Gloves should not be worn except to deliver and pick up trays for patients on applicable transmission-based isolation precautions. If gloves are worn, they must be changed, and hand hygiene performed between each patient room.
2. Pediatric Patient Formula Room
 - For guidelines for the Formula Room, refer to the Nutrition and Food Services policy: [Human Milk Preparation, Storage, Handling and Dispensing](#).

C. Food Supplies, Products, and Storage

1. The NFS areas and staff must comply with all applicable requirements of the North Carolina Food Code and the Rules Governing the Food Protection and Sanitation of Food Establishments (15A NCAC 18A .2600). Additional information regarding the requirements may be found at the [North Carolina Food Protection Program](#) website.
2. Linens are laundered according to the Infection Prevention policy: [Laundry and Linen Service](#).

D. Food Preparation and Service

- The NFS areas and staff must comply with all applicable requirements of the North Carolina Food Code and the Rules Governing the Food Protection and Sanitation of Food Establishments (15A NCAC 18A .2600). Additional information regarding the requirements may be found at the [North Carolina Food Protection Program](#) website.

E. Equipment

1. Separate cutting boards for raw and uncooked foods/meats are necessary and are color-coded according to the food prepared. Prepared foods should not be cut on the same boards as raw foods. Cutting boards used in food preparation should be made of plastic and cleaned in the dishwasher.
2. All equipment and utensils should be designed to be smooth, easily cleanable, durable, and kept in good repair. Any plastic-ware, china, and/or glassware that has lost its glaze or are chipped or cracked are to be discarded.
3. All reusable eating and drinking utensils should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized after each use.
4. All food grinders, choppers, and mixers should be cleaned, sanitized, dried, and

reassembled after each use per the manufacturer's recommendations.

5. All kitchenware and food contact surfaces of equipment used in the preparation or serving of food or drink and all food storage utensils should be thoroughly cleaned after each use. Cooking surfaces should be cleaned once a day with an approved cleaning agent and sanitizer. Non-food contact surfaces should be cleaned at such intervals to keep them in clean and sanitary conditions.
6. All utensils and equipment should be stored so as to drain, dry, and be protected from splash, dust, or contamination.
7. Disposable containers and utensils should be discarded after one use.
8. Dishwashers should be drained and flushed after each meal period. The machine should be maintained and operated according to the manufacturer's instructions. The dishwasher should maintain a final sanitizing rinse of at least 180°F and a wash cycle of 160°F. Stacking and emptying of the dishwasher should be done by separate staff to prevent recontamination of dishes. In exceptional circumstances with only one person available, he or she must perform hand hygiene and put on a clean apron before handling clean dishes. Clean utensils and pans will be stored on clean surfaces at all times. All items stacked for storage will be allowed to completely air dry before stacking or cross-stacked.
9. Steam tables must maintain hot foods at temperatures of 140°F or above and must not contaminate food held therein through splashing or condensation. Steam tables are not for warming food, they are for keeping hot foods hot.
10. Cold tables must keep cold foods below 41°F and are not used to refrigerate foods; they are for keeping cold foods cold.
11. Ideally, ice should be dispensed by an ice machine. The outside of ice machines should be cleaned and sanitized daily. The inside of ice machines should be cleaned, and preventive maintenance performed at a frequency specified by the manufacturer. If an ice scoop is necessary, hand hygiene should be performed before, and gloves must be worn during the procedure. The scoop used with the ice storage chest should be held by the handle only. Unused ice should not be returned to the ice storage chest. The access door should remain closed except when removing ice. The ice scoop should be washed daily in a dishwasher. The ice scoop should be stored in a tray or holder when not in use. The ice chest should be cleaned after use and when visibly soiled with detergent and hot water.
12. Knives should be cleaned, sanitized, and dried before storing in fabric knife bags. Fabric knife bags should be cleaned and sanitized once weekly and when soiled.
13. The blades and shafts of the non-electric can openers are sanitized daily in the dishwasher. The electric can openers are wiped daily with a sanitizing solution.

F. Daily Cleaning

1. Ranges and grills should be cleaned daily with grease-release cleaner.
2. All work surfaces and counters are cleaned and sanitized daily and more frequently as needed. Utensils and equipment should be cleaned and sanitized after each use.
3. Holding refrigerators and hot holding units will be cleaned daily.
4. All floor surfaces must be wet-mopped daily and as needed with an EPA-registered disinfectant. Mops and brooms should not be left in food preparation areas when not in use.
5. All agents used for cleaning equipment and utensils must be approved for that use.
6. All garbage is removed and handled safely for sanitation purposes. Refer to Nutrition and Food Services policy: [Sanitation and Infection Control Program Overview](#). Trash cans should be stored away from food preparation areas.

G. Environmental Culturing

- Environmental culturing should be done as deemed necessary by the Infection Prevention Department. Infection Prevention will perform environmental culturing as indicated.

H. Suspected Foodborne Outbreak

- Responsibilities of the Nutrition and Food Services during an outbreak are as follows:
 - a. Notify Infection Prevention of any reports of gastrointestinal complaints from patients, visitors, or staff at 984-974-7500 or page the on-call Infection Preventionist after hours using the myUNC Health Directory.
 - b. Save suspected food for culturing.
 - c. Document departmental conditions at the time of preparation of suspected food. Provide a list of foods served during suspected time interval, as well as a list of food handlers. Provide the dietary records for any patients suspected of being associated with the outbreak.
 - d. Implement and supervise prevention and control measures to prevent further occurrence of the illness.
 - e. Follow state and local laws/regulations when reporting to local health authorities.
 - f. Follow health department guidance regarding cessation of serving suspected foods and terminal cleans of the kitchen.

- g. Participate as needed in partnership calls with the health department about the investigation.

I. Food Prepared and Stored Outside of Nutrition and Food Services (i.e., Clinic Areas, Inpatient Care Areas)

Refer to the following [Infection Prevention Guidelines for Safe Patient Care](#).

J. Vending Machines

Vending machines will be maintained according to all federal, state, and local health codes and regulations.

IV. References

North Carolina Food Code Manual, Adoption of the US Food and Drug Administration's 2009 Food Code, Effective September 1, 2012, Available from: <http://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/faf/docs/foodprot/NC-FoodCodeManual-2009-FINAL.pdf>

Puckett, R. (2014). Nutrition Services. In P. Grota (Ed.), APIC text of infection control and epidemiology 4th edition (pp. 109-1 – 109-15). Washington, DC: APIC.

Rules Governing the Food Protection and Sanitation of Food Establishments, 15A NCAB 18A .2600, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health, Environmental Health Section, effective September 1, 2012. Available from: <https://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/docs/rules/294306-26-2600.pdf>

V. Related Policies

[Infection Prevention Policy: Hand Hygiene and Use of Antiseptics for Skin Preparation](#)

[Infection Prevention Policy: Infection Prevention Guidelines for Safe Patient Care](#)

[Infection Prevention Policy: Isolation Precautions](#)

[Infection Prevention Policy: Laundry and Linen Service](#)

[Nutrition and Food Services Policy: Human Milk Preparation, Storage, Handling and Dispensing](#)

[Nutrition and Food Services Policy: Sanitation and Infection Control Program Overview](#)

[Occupational Health Services Policy: Infection Prevention and Screening Program: Occupational Health Service](#)

Attachments

1. Farmer's Market

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Stat Administrator	Kimberly Novak-Jones: Nurse Educator	03/2024
	Thomas Ivester: CMO/VP Medical Affairs	03/2024
	Emily Vavalle: Dir Epidemiology	03/2024
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Applicability

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