

Appendix 17. Rules for safe preparation of food to prevent cholera

1. Cook (raw) foods thoroughly

Fish, shellfish, and vegetables are often contaminated with cholera bacteria. Therefore, heat all the parts of the food to at least 70°C. Do not eat uncooked foods unless they can be peeled or shelled.

2. Eat cooked foods immediately

When there is a delay between cooking and eating food, as when food is sold in restaurants or by street vendors, it should be kept over heat, at 60°C or more, until served.

3. Cover cooked foods and store carefully

If you must prepare foods in advance or want to keep leftovers, be sure to cool them to below 10°C as soon as possible and then cover and store them in a refrigerator or icebox below 10°C. Cooked foods that have been stored must be thoroughly reheated before eating. Foods for infants should be eaten immediately after being prepared, and should not be stored at all.

4. Reheat cooked foods thoroughly

Proper storage at low temperature slows the growth of bacteria but does not kill them. Once again, thorough reheating means all parts of the food must reach at least 70°C. Eat food while it is still hot.

5. Avoid contact between raw and cooked foods

Safely cooked food can become contaminated through even the slightest contact with raw food (directly or indirectly through cutting surfaces or knife blades, for example).

6. Choose foods processed for safety

Canned, acidic and dried foods should be without risk.

7. Wash hands repeatedly

Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food and after every interruption, especially if you have to change or clean a baby or have used the toilet or latrine. After preparing raw foods such as fish or shellfish, wash your hands again before handling other foods.

8. Keep all kitchen surfaces clean

Since foods are so easily contaminated, any surface used for food preparation must be kept absolutely clean. Think of every food scrap, crumb or spot as a potential source of bacteria. Cloths used for washing or drying food, or for preparation of surfaces, dishes and utensils, should be changed every day and boiled before reuse. Separate cloths that are used for cleaning the floors also require daily washing.

9. Use safe water

Safe water is just as important for food preparation as it is for drinking.