

Briefing note on The Five Keys to Safer Food

1. **Keep clean**
2. **Separate raw and cooked**
3. **Cook thoroughly**
4. **Keep food at safe temperatures**
5. **Use safe water and raw materials**

Prevention of foodborne diseases: The issue

Although governments throughout the world are doing their best to improve the safety of the food supply, the occurrence of foodborne disease remains a significant health issue in both developed and developing countries. In recent years, a number of extremely serious foodborne disease outbreaks have occurred on virtually every continent, demonstrating both the public health and social significance of foodborne disease.

Even though the contamination of food can occur at any stage of the food production, a high level of foodborne disease is caused by foods improperly prepared, or mishandled at home or in food service establishments. **Education of food handlers (which includes all consumers) is therefore essential in the prevention of foodborne disease.** As part of its global strategy to decrease the burden of foodborne disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed materials and activities to educate food handlers about their responsibilities for food safety.

WHO's response to country needs

WHO identified the need to communicate simple and clear messages based on evidence and the need to provide countries with materials they can easily use, reproduce and adapt to different target audiences. After a year of consultation with food safety experts and risk communicators, WHO introduced in 2001 a global health message with five steps to prevent foodborne disease: the [Five Keys to Safer Food](#). WHO also produced the [Five Keys to Safer Food Manual](#), to provide the core food safety information needed to teach a food safety training course and suggest ways to modify the information for presentation to different audiences. WHO adapted the Five Keys message to different settings, such as Healthy Markets (see the WHO [Guide to Healthy Food Markets](#)) and to Travellers (see the WHO [Guide on Safe Food for Travellers](#)). The Five keys are also used in emergency situations such as prevention against Avian influenza.

Delivering the Five Keys messages in countries

WHO actively promotes the adaptation of the Five Keys message to the local level. Educational projects for high-risk groups, including children, women and others involved in food preparation and handling, such as street-food vendors are being implemented and the local level in countries both by public and private institutions through the active participation of the WHO's network of Regional and Country offices and partner organizations. Internationally disseminated and now translated into more than 50 languages, mostly on initiatives from the countries, the Five Keys to Safer Food have become an international reference and a stand alone product.


Capacity building through education and training

As the need to strengthen food safety education programmes for the prevention of foodborne diseases is increasingly being recognized by countries, WHO has now pilot tested a "Train the Trainer" Course on the Five Keys to Safer Food which provides guidance on how to both educate and promote adoption of safe food handling behaviours. The first module, designed to target women, was tested in South Africa, Tunisia and Belize. The materials are being finalized and will be made available public in June 2009. WHO plans to extend the adaptation of this training to other settings, health workers working in rural settings, school children, street-food vendors, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Building on the Five Keys to Safer Food Concept

Based on the success of the Five Keys to Safer Food, WHO extended the Five Keys concept to offer broader advice to people to improve their health by providing simple messages on healthy diets and physical activity (**The 3 Fives - Five keys to safer food, a healthy diet, and appropriate physical activity**). The 3 Fives were launched to promote healthy lifestyles during the Beijing Olympics. More information is available at http://www.who.int/foodsafety/consumer/3_fives_Beijing/en/index.html.

WHO strongly encourages countries to adapt, reproduce and disseminate the Five Keys to Safer Food message. More information is available on the WHO web site at www.who.int/foodsafety/consumer/5keys/en

See examples of adaptation of the Five Keys to Safer Food message and implementation of projects in countries on page 2 

Examples of adaptation of the Five Keys message and implementation of educational projects in countries

Africa: The Five Keys are used to Train Food handlers at home, schools, hospitals, health centres, food markets, food establishments and vending sites, canteens, restaurants, supermarkets.
Many educational programmes are being implemented all over the African Region.



Use of Five keys to teach food safety in schools

Guatemala and Central America

The project was developed to teach Food Safety in urban and rural elementary schools. The materials were endorsed by the Ministry of Education. It is expected that including these tools in the national school curricula will contribute to a reduction in malnutrition and morbidity and mortality rates caused by water and foodborne diseases, especially in children.



Teaching cross contamination in Schools in Japan.
The National Institute of Public Health, Japan adapted the Five Keys to Safer Food Manual to elementary schools children.

Use of the Five Keys in the tourism sector

China: On the occasion of the Olympic Games, WHO and the Ministry of Health, PR China, released a specific adaptation of the WHO Guide on Safe Food for Travellers. The Guide was endorsed by The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) and was distributed in strategic locations such as Beijing airport, Olympic venues, hotels, restaurants and tourist destinations.



Promotion of the guide for travellers at Beijing airport



Use of the Five Keys to empower women

Together with the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW), WHO provided Five Keys training to women in impoverished neighbourhoods in Cairo, Egypt. The goal of the training was to enable these women to overcome many of the unsafe food practices.

Training session in Egypt



First pilot session of the Train the Trainer programme targeted to Women, Pretoria, South Africa. The Department of Health, South Africa, will use the programme to train food handlers in preparation of the 2010 Fifa World Cup

Use of the Five Keys in Emergency situations

Preventing outbreaks after the Tsunami

Following the Tsunami, Five keys poster and adapted version of training manual were distributed widely through the affected countries. These materials were used in refugee camps, marketplaces, health care facilities and schools; and helped prevent the secondary outbreak of disease which is often associated with poor sanitation and overcrowding.

Prevention of Avian Influenza

In 2006 WHO adapted the Five Keys messages to specifically address the health concerns associated with handling and preparing poultry and poultry products potentially infected with highly pathogenic Avian influenza (HPAI) virus. In addition, the basic food hygiene principles of separate, wash and cook were incorporated into the FAO/UNICEF/WHO Social Mobilization Campaign designed to prevent the spread of avian influenza.



Examples of adaptation of the Five Keys poster Palau and Mali