Why educate the food handlers?

Even though food contamination can occur at any stage of the food production chain, a high proportion of foodborne disease is caused by foods improperly prepared or handled at home or in food service establishments. Proper food handling is of particular importance for people in high-risk groups (e.g. children, older people, pregnant and immunocompromised individuals) and their care-givers.

Education of food handlers, which include the consumers, is an essential component of the measures to be taken by governments to prevent foodborne diseases and build sustainable development.

What is WHO doing?

WHO assists Member States in promoting food safety through systematic disease prevention.

As part of its global strategy to decrease the burden of foodborne diseases, WHO identified the need to communicate a simple global health message, based on scientific evidence to train all types of food handlers, including consumers.

The Five Keys to Safer Food message, and associated training materials, were developed to provide countries with materials that are easy to use, reproduce and adapt to different target audiences.

Achievements

Developed in 2001, the WHO Five Keys to Safer Food have become an international reference source. Materials have been adopted and adapted by over 100 Member States to design educational programmes for food inspectors, health educators, street-food vendors, school-children, women and others target audiences involved in food preparation and handling.

As a result, thousands of food handlers are empowered to prevent foodborne diseases, make safe and informed choices, and have a voice to push for a safer food supply.
WHO develops messages and materials to promote hygienic practices to ensure sustainability of safe and nutritious locally produced food supply.

"Sometimes very simple messages and measures can have a big impact on health protection. These Five Keys to Safer Food have already contributed to the prevention of foodborne illness and deserve to be communicated more widely"

Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO

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