

# How to use this pack

## Welcome to Safer food, better business for childminders

### Is this pack for me?

This pack is for you if you are a registered childminder or childcarer on domestic premises (where you look after children in your home) and you usually provide meals and drinks for the children in your care. It will help you comply with the law.



Do you usually:

- provide meals, snacks or drinks (apart from mains tap water) for children or babies?  
Yes  No
- and/or
- reheat food provided by a parent/carer, or cut it up?  
Yes  No

If you said **yes** to one or both of these questions, then this pack is for you. The law changed in 2006 and you must now comply with food safety and hygiene regulations.

If you think this pack does not cover all the food preparation and cooking you do, contact the environmental health service at your local authority for advice.

If **no** (you don't usually do either of these things) and you just do the following, you do not have to use this pack:

- keep packed lunches in your fridge that are brought by parents/carers  
and/or
- provide plates and cutlery for the children to use to eat their own packed lunches  
and/or
- only provide food occasionally, e.g. a birthday cake for one of the children, or if a parent/carer has been delayed in picking up a child

If you are not sure whether to use this pack, contact the environmental health service at your local authority for advice.

Home childcarers and nannies who look after children in the child's home do not need to use this pack.

If you run childcare on non-domestic premises, e.g. a nursery, you should use the pack called 'Safer food, better business for caterers'. However, you may find some of the information in this pack useful, e.g. the advice on feeding babies and children.

## How does this pack help me comply with the law?



Food safety and hygiene regulations say that you must be able to show what you do to make sure the food you provide for children and babies is safe to eat. You must also have this written down and the pack helps you to do this.

This pack is based on the principles of HACCP (hazard analysis critical control point), but you will not find words such as 'HACCP' or 'hazard' in the pack because we have cut out all the jargon.

The pack has been developed by the Food Standards Agency to be practical and easy to use, with as little paperwork as possible.

There are also food hygiene requirements in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation stage and other regulations that form part of your registration as a childminder/childcarer.

In England you can get further information on these from Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) or in Wales from the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales or in Scotland from the Care Commission. These requirements do not apply in Northern Ireland.

## Who should take charge of the pack?

As a registered childminder/childcarer you should take charge of this pack.

## Can I use Safer food, better business for caterers instead?

If you are already using Safer food, better business for caterers, you can continue using it if you prefer.

## How does the pack work?

The pack contains eight 'safe method' sheets and a diary. The safe methods are divided into four different sections, each with a different colour and symbol. The sections are named after 'the 4 Cs', which are the four main things to remember for good food hygiene: Cross-contamination, Cleaning, Chilling and Cooking. There is also a diary section.



### Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination is one of the most common causes of food poisoning. It happens when harmful bacteria are spread onto food from other food, worktops, hands or equipment/utensils. These harmful bacteria often come from raw meat/poultry and eggs. Other sources of bacteria can include people, pests, pets, nappies and laundry.

Food also needs protecting from 'chemical contamination' (where chemicals get into food, e.g. cleaning products) and from 'physical contamination' (where objects get into food e.g. broken glass).



### Cleaning

Effective cleaning is essential to get rid of harmful bacteria and stop them spreading to food.



### Chilling

Chilling food properly helps to stop harmful bacteria from growing. Some foods need to be kept chilled to keep them safe, such as foods with a 'use by' date. You also need to take care with frozen foods, especially when defrosting.



### Cooking

It is essential to cook food properly to kill any harmful bacteria. If it is not cooked or reheated properly, it might not be safe for children or babies to eat. Some foods also need extra care, such as infant formula and breast milk.



### Diary

The diary is an important part of the pack. It helps you keep the records you need to comply with the law. The diary contains 'action sheets' and '3-monthly review' sheets. You can find out more about these under 'How to use the diary' below – and in the introduction to the diary section.

## How to use the safe methods

Front

Safe method:

### Keeping food cold

It is very important to keep certain foods cold because harmful bacteria can grow in them if they are not chilled properly. It is also important to take care when freezing or defrosting food.



#### Safety point

Certain foods need to be kept in the fridge to keep them safe e.g.

- food with a 'use by' date
- food that says 'keep refrigerated' on the label
- cooked food e.g. food you have cooked in advance or leftovers
- ready-to-eat food such as sandwiches, salads and some desserts

#### Why?

If these types of food are not kept cold enough, harmful bacteria could grow.



#### How do you do this?

Do you put these types of food into the fridge (or freezer) straight away:

- when you return with shopping or when food is delivered?
- when a parent/guardian brings food?
- after you have used it?
- after you have cooked and cooled down food?

If not, what do you do?

Put food that you buy frozen e.g. ice cream, in the freezer straight away unless you are going to use it immediately.

Make sure that you do not use food after its 'use by' date.

Food that has passed its 'use by' date might not be safe to eat.

It is a good idea to check 'use by' dates every day.

Make sure your fridge is set at 5°C or below and your freezer is working properly.

Setting your fridge at 5°C will make sure the food is kept at 8°C or below. This is a legal requirement in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

You can check this using a fridge thermometer. Some fridges will have a digital display to show what temperature they are set at but you should check regularly that the temperature shown on the display is accurate, using a fridge thermometer.

You should check the temperature of your fridge every day. You only need to write it down if something goes wrong.

If you take food (e.g. sandwiches or yoghurts) with you when you go out, it is a good idea to use a cool bag and ice blocks to keep the food cold until you are ready to eat it.

It is important to keep chilled food cold to prevent harmful bacteria from growing.

Do you do this? Yes  No

If you cook food that will not be eaten immediately (or have leftovers), cool it down, ideally within one to two hours, and then put it in the fridge or freezer.

Harmful bacteria can grow in food that is not cooled down as quickly as possible and then put in the fridge or freezer.



Use up any leftovers within 48 hours.

You can make food cool down more quickly by dividing food into smaller portions.

The 'Safety point' column highlights things that are important to make food safely.

Pictures help to illustrate the safety points.

The 'Why?' column tells you why the safety point is important.

The 'How do you do this?' column is for you to write down what you do.

In some places you only need to tick a box and in other places write a small amount.

An example of a completed safe method

Sometimes the pictures are marked with one of these symbols: = right = wrong

Back

Safety point	Why?	How do you do this?
<b>Defrosting</b> Food should be thoroughly defrosted before cooking (unless the manufacturer's instructions tell you to cook from frozen). If the manufacturer gives instructions on how to defrost the food, follow these.	If food is still frozen or partially frozen, it will take longer to cook. The outside of the food could be cooked, but the centre might not be, which means it could contain harmful bacteria.	Do you check food is thoroughly defrosted before cooking? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If not, what do you do? <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;">             Cook food from frozen following the manufacturer's instructions.           </div>
Ideally, defrost small amounts of food in the fridge. (Try to plan ahead and allow enough time for foods to defrost in this way.)	Putting food in the fridge will keep it at a safe temperature while it is defrosting.	Do you use this method? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
You could also defrost food in the microwave on the 'defrost' setting as long as the food is going to be cooked straight away.	This is a fast way to defrost food.	Do you use this method? Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Only defrost foods at room temperature if they do not need to be kept in the fridge e.g. bread.	Foods will defrost quite quickly at room temperature but harmful bacteria could grow in some food if it gets too warm while defrosting.	Do you do this? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

The 'What to do if things go wrong' column gives practical tips on how to tackle problems.

If things go wrong, write down what happened and what you did in your action sheet. Each safe method reminds you to do this.

To complete the pack you need to work through each section and complete all the safe methods that are relevant to you. Fill in the date and sign each safe method when you have completed it.

**Think twice!**

Once food has been defrosted keep it in the fridge and use it within 24 hours. Do not freeze the food again.

**What to do if things go wrong**

- If you notice food has passed its 'use by' date, throw it away.

**If your fridge is not working properly, you should:**

- Move food that needs to be kept cold to another fridge (if you have one) or a cold area, or put it in a cool bag containing an ice block. If you cannot do this use the food straight away, or if you do not know how long the fridge has been broken down, throw the food away.
- If food that should be kept cold, has been left out of the fridge for a long time and is no longer cold, you should throw it away.

**If you find that your freezer is not working properly, you should do the following things:**

- If food is still frozen** (i.e. hard and icy) it should be moved to another freezer straight away, if you have one. If you do not have another freezer, defrost the food safely and use within 24 hours.
- If food has begun to defrost** you should continue to defrost it safely.
- If food has fully defrosted** (i.e. it is soft and warm), throw the food away.
- If food that needs to be kept frozen** (e.g. ice cream) has started to defrost, do not refreeze it. Use it immediately or throw it away.

**Write down what went wrong and what you did about it on your action sheet.**

Safe method completed: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



## 3-monthly review



Date	3-monthly review completed	Details of a serious or persistent problem or The change in the way you are working	What you are going to do, or have already done, about the problem or Any changes you need to make to your safe methods
25.06.09	✓	Have a new baby in my care (Richard Brown).	Need to change the 'Babies and children – special advice' safe method to show how I store made-up formula milk provided by the parents.
25.09.09	✓	No problem/changes	No action to take

Fill in the date.

Tick to say you have completed your 3-monthly review.

Write down details of any serious or persistent problems and any changes in the way you are working.

Give details of any action you are going to take, or have already taken, as a result of the problem/change. Also write down any changes you need to make to your safe methods.

## Questions

### What do I do next?

Work through the pack and fill in all of the safe methods that are relevant to you.

Most childminders will need to fill in all the safe methods. But if, for example, you only serve cold food e.g. sandwiches, then the 'Cooking and reheating' safe method would not be relevant.

Remember that once you have worked through the pack, you need to make sure you are following the safe methods every day.

### Do I need to keep lots of daily records?



No, you will not need to keep lots of daily records. Once you have worked through the pack and filled in all of the relevant safe methods, you will only need to fill in the action sheet if you have a problem or something changes, and to complete the 3-monthly review. See the 'How to use the diary' section for more information.

It is a legal requirement to keep a record of what food products you have bought, who you bought them from, the quantity and date. Usually the easiest way to do this is to keep all your receipts, even for small amounts. This is so that – if there is a safety problem with food you have provided – you or an enforcement officer from your local authority can check the details of the food.

Keep these records in a way that makes it easy for you or an enforcement officer to check them. There is no set time for how long you need to keep these. As a guide, keep them for at least four weeks after you have provided the food to the children.

### What if I need extra copies of the safe methods or diary pages?

If you need a new copy of a safe method, you can download one from [food.gov.uk/childminders](https://www.food.gov.uk/childminders). If you need more copies of the action sheet or the 3-monthly review sheet, you can either download them or photocopy the sheets in the pack before you have filled them in.

### Does anyone else need to use this pack?

If anyone helps you to prepare or serve food for the children/babies you look after, it is very important to train them in all the safe methods that are relevant to what they do. Make sure they have worked through the 'Personal hygiene' safe method before they do any work with food. You should also supervise them to check they are following the safe methods properly. Keep a note of any training on the Action sheet in your diary.

## Questions

### Where can I get more information?



For more information about food safety, talk to the environmental health service at your local authority or visit [food.gov.uk/childminders](http://food.gov.uk/childminders)

For details of Food Standards Agency publications visit [food.gov.uk](http://food.gov.uk) or call 0845 606 0667

For more information about what foods to give to babies and children, see [eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages](http://eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages)

England – you can find more information on registration as a childminder or childcarer on domestic premises on the Ofsted website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Scotland – visit the Care Commission at [www.carecommission.com](http://www.carecommission.com)

Wales – visit the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales at [www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk)

Northern Ireland – contact the Early Years team at your local Health and Social Services Trust or visit the Northern Ireland Childminding Association's site at [www.nicma.org](http://www.nicma.org)

## About this guidance

This guidance follows the Government Code of Practice on Guidance. If you believe this guidance breaches the Code for any reason, or if you have any comments on the guidance, please contact us at [HACCPTeam@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:HACCPTeam@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk)

This guidance was published in 2009 and it will be reviewed again in 2012.