



AUDITING



DIETETICS



TRAINING



SPEECH
PATHOLOGY



FOOD
SAFETY



OPERATIONAL
SUPPORT

Keeping Food Safe while being Environmentally Aware

By Sarah Friedrich, OSCAR Care Group Food Safety Auditor & Trainer



We are all becoming more environmentally aware but sometimes messages on energy and water saving contradict good food safety advice. Remember that being ill is a drain on the economy and not something we would wish on our family and friends. Some types of food poisoning can have severe or even chronic consequences.

Water

Saving water is important but so is washing your hands. Washing fruit and vegetables under running water removes loose soil and helps to remove many bacteria and viruses. If you wash fruit and vegetables that are not going to be cooked in a bowl to save water this can just create a microbiological soup that may re-contaminate the food or your hands depending on the types and amounts washed. Alternatively, you can catch running water used for washing in a bowl or bucket and then put it on the garden where it will not contact other ready to eat fruits, vegetables and herbs. Read labels of pre-cut or peeled fruits and vegetables. If they have already been washed before packaging and they are within their use by date then washing again is not necessary.

Energy

Don't be tempted to save electricity by making your fridge warmer. It must run at 5°C or below to ensure bacteria don't grow.

Reusable containers

Reusable food and drink containers such as keep cups are becoming popular. Make sure your containers are clean, washing them in soapy hot water, rinsing and drying thoroughly. Make sure the containers are transported closed so they don't get recontaminated and take any perishable food home straight away in a cooler bag (with an ice brick if a long distance). It is also up to the shop/ cafe if they allow this to be done eg if their scales can be set for different containers.

It is great to grow your own food as it tastes good, it is fresh and it helps our children understand where food comes from. You can still get food poisoning or contamination from your own produce but this can be avoided with a bit of careful planning.

Remember not to put 'grey' water from the house, such as the washing machine water, on to fruit, vegetables or herbs growing in the garden. Don't store grey water as microbes will grow in it and don't use water from the washing up or dishwasher as it has too much fat and other solids which can be bad for plant growth.

Don't locate your garden near any rubbish piles or bins that may contain chemicals that could leak into the garden or attract vermin. Carefully choose the garden site for hazards. For example, if you have an older building avoid using soil that could have been contaminated by scrapings of lead paint many years ago.

Make sure the compost you buy is treated and if you make it yourself ensure it is well composted; this not only kills any weed seeds but also helps kill food poisoning bacteria. Prevent easy access by vermin and pests, like mice and rats, which can spread disease. Never use any type of manure on food plants that hasn't been thoroughly composted as it will be contaminated with bacteria some of which can make you sick.



Take precautions to protect your vegetable garden from entry of domestic and wild pests. Watch for evidence of invasions and discard damaged crops.

Minimise the use of garden chemicals and make sure you stick to the instructions for use. Use exactly the amount recommended on the label and don't spray other areas of the garden in windy conditions in case the spray drifts onto fruit and vegetables. Some chemicals will have withholding periods before you harvest any fruit or vegetables that have been sprayed so that there are not residues in the food when consumed.

Do you need further Food Safety information?

This article was written by Sarah Friedrich, OSCAR Care Group Food Safety Auditor & Trainer. Please call or email Sarah via our contact details below.



AUDITING



DIETETICS



FOOD SAFETY



OPERATIONAL SUPPORT



SPEECH PATHOLOGY



TRAINING