

Foodborne Illness:

PROTECTING YOUR SENIORS



Using safe food handling practices is important for everyone, but especially important when preparing food for older adults, since they are more susceptible to foodborne illnesses.

Each year in the US,
foodborne illness causes:

48
million illnesses

128,000
hospitalizations

3,000
deaths

Foodborne Illness in Older Adults

Seniors are more vulnerable to foodborne illness due to the changes that occur during aging.

- Chronic illnesses (diabetes, cancer, heart diseases) and medications may weaken the immune system.
- Organs and body systems do not work as well, weakening the immune system. For example, the liver and kidney may not rid the body of toxins.
- The immune system slows down in recognizing and removing harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses.

It is estimated that foodborne diseases account for 48 million illnesses, 128,000 hospitalizations, and 3,000 deaths in the United States annually. When an older adult contracts a foodborne illness, they are more likely to have a longer recovery, undergo hospitalization, or even die.

Although there are multiple causes of foodborne illness, improper temperature control is a common failure point in many segments of the food service production and distribution chain.



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A cold chain is a temperature-controlled supply chain and recognized as the most reliable method of assuring food safety.

Weak Links in the Cold Chain Make Seniors Sick

Although the food industry has adopted several methods of packaging, transporting, and delivering food, the “cold chain” process has emerged as the most reliable method of assuring food safety. With this method, food is maintained at temperatures that prevent the growth of harmful bacteria and pathogens that are responsible for the majority of foodborne-related illnesses.

GA Foods' standard operating procedures preserve the cold chain process from the time of production until consumed. All food is produced under the guidance of our science-based HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) quality assurance and food safety processes. We utilize high-speed assembly lines with rapid and continuous cooling and freezing equipment. Meals are maintained in cold storage until delivery.

Food Safety = All Hands on Deck

Food safety is not achieved by chance or by luck. It requires a concerted effort by everyone involved in the process. From the janitor to the CEO, the cook to the delivery driver – every member of a food service team must be knowledgeable of and dedicated to the necessary steps involved in keeping food safe throughout the entire cold chain. This level of unity is the foundation of the processes and systems required to ensure that the chain is never broken and that safe, quality, nourishing food is always delivered.

Because processes and systems are only as good as the people that carry them out, safe and high quality food must be part of a food service provider's organizational culture. At GA Foods, our entire food service team is involved in on-going education and training programs on the foundational principles of food safety. This training empowers them with the knowledge of just how important their specific job is to the cold chain process and to our common goal of excellence in food quality and safety.



GA Foods: Nourishment. Delivered.

Our core values instill a sense of pride as each member of our team carries out his or her job duties with excellence. Each person driven by a sense of ownership, accountability, and integrity, armed with the knowledge that they are an important link in the cold chain and are in fact making a difference and touching lives every day.

Our philosophy on food safety is simple, yet effective – safe, quality food is the result of scientifically sound processes and systems,

carried out by dedicated and well-trained people, in a practical and effective manner. Our state-of-the-art, USDA-inspected facility, coupled with our high sanitation & food handling standards, provides us with an environment that ensures our products are produced under the highest sanitary conditions.

It is with this dedication to a unified team effort that GA Foods eliminates weak links in the cold chain. It is with this knowledge that we assure you, our valued customer that your participants are in safe hands with us.

Heat and Food Quality

Food held at hot temperatures also keeps bacteria from growing. However, if a hot food is held too long it begins to deteriorate, affecting appearance, aroma, flavor, and texture. Food becomes mushy, overcooked, discolored, bitter, and dried out.



Are Fresh Meals Healthier than Frozen?

People sometimes assume that fresh meals are a healthier choice than frozen meals. The assumption is fresh meals aren't as processed and the fresh produce is more nutritious. However, this is only true if the meal goes from the farm to the table in a very short amount of time. Many studies have compared the nutritional content of fresh vs. frozen foods and have found that frozen food has the same, if not better, nutritional value as fresh foods.

Here are the cold, hard facts:

Frozen produce is not harvested until fully ripened. Fresh produce is harvested before reaching peak ripeness, so it can ripen during transportation and storage. This means nutrients do not develop to full potential. However, frozen produce is allowed to ripen before being picked. The mature fruits and vegetables contain high levels of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

The quick-freeze process locks in the high levels of nutrients. Once a fruit or vegetable is picked, it begins to lose nutrients immediately. Since most fresh produce travels long distances to meal manufacturers, much of the nutrient content is lost prior to preparation. Frozen foods are flash-frozen immediately after being harvested. This process assures there is minimal nutrient loss when processing the foods. This is true with both meats and produce.

Nutrient content and food safety of frozen meals isn't compromised during transit and storage. Fresh meals are subjected to light and heat during transportation and storage, causing further nutrient loss. Hot storage does not slow down this loss. Frozen foods can be transported and stored without compromising nutrient content or exposing the foods to dangerous temperature zones. Per Foodsafety.gov, frozen foods remain safe indefinitely.



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