



Working Without Gas or Electricity

Advice for Children's Services

This fact sheet is designed for children's services who, in the event of a disruption to the gas or electricity, may need to make alternative arrangements for food preparation, hygiene and cleaning.

Nutrition

In the absence of any cooking facilities you can provide a balanced diet for children by:

- serving nutritious staple foods such as fruit, salads, breads (sandwiches) and cereal products, as well as packaged and ready-to-eat foods;
- pasteurised milk, fresh or long life, is a food as well as a drink and does not need to be boiled or even warmed. This can be used for children over 12 months of age.
- For children under 12 months of age, continue with breast or formula feeding as usual.

If electricity is available you can use cooking units such as microwave ovens, electric frypans and electric hot plates.

If gas is available you can use your normal gas cooking appliances.

Alternative cooking appliances such as BBQs and portable camping stoves can also be used.

Food Safety

Be extra careful preparing and cooking food. Food-borne illness can be caused by under cooking food or inadequate reheating of cooked foods. It can also be caused through inadequate cleaning of food surfaces and equipment.

Food storage and preparation without gas or electricity

If the gas and/or electric power supply is cut off for a period of time there is a problem with refrigerating and cooking food.

Refrigeration

To keep many foods in a safe condition, it is necessary to keep them frozen or chilled.

Examples of such food are eggs, poultry, seafood, dairy products (milk and cream), meat pieces, sausages.

If power is not available to run your refrigerator or freezer, these foods will quickly perish and become inedible.

The *best way* to deal with the problem is to **keep your supplies of these items to the minimum.**

- **Only buy what you are able to cook and eat straight away.**
- **Buy foods (bread and various spreads) that do not need refrigeration or cooking.**

Remember: if the power goes off you can't put food back in the refrigerator.

Other ways of keeping food cold

Use Eskies and Car Fridges to store food for short periods of time.

Cover the refrigerator, if possible, to improve insulation. However, to keep the temperature down you will need a steady supply of ice. This may not be possible if there are power problems.

How do you cook without electricity or gas?

Use a BBQ to cook raw foods.

By following the guidelines below you can minimise the risk of food poisoning.

Use food that does not need to be cooked.

If Cooking Food

- Thoroughly cook raw foods, particularly raw meat. When cooking mince, sausages, hamburger patties, rolled roasts and chicken, ensure they are cooked right through and there is no pink meat.
- Reheat foods so that the internal temperature is steaming hot.

Note for microwave oven users

Microwaves are a quick and convenient way to cook foods, however they tend to heat foods unevenly, leaving cold and hot spots. So when microwaving foods, always rotate and stir products during cooking. Part of the microwave cooking process includes standing time. When using a microwave read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and observe these standing times to ensure the food is completely cooked or re heated before it is eaten.

Do not use the microwave for warming babies' bottles because of the risk of scalding. It is safe for babies to drink cold milk.

Cleaning in the kitchen

Tips for Cleaning and Sanitising

- Remember—the warmer the water you use for cleaning, the more effective the detergent is likely to be. A little hot water will go a long way!;
- If you are using detergents in cold water in situations that normally use hot water—you may need to increase the concentration;
- Use a little more 'elbow-grease' than normal;
- Clean more often; and
- Pre-rinse as much as possible. Remember—moist food waste is easier to remove than dried on soils.

Manual Washing Up

- Remove as many food scraps as possible from equipment and utensils using disposable paper towelling;
- Pre-rinse items with cold water;
- Wash with cold water using your normal detergent. If you can add boiling water—all the better. When washing with cold water in situations that normally use hot water— increase the concentration of the detergent;
- Rinse with cold water and soak in sanitiser solution—either using your usual sanitiser or 12.5ml of domestic bleach (4% available chlorine) diluted in 10 litres of potable tap water, for 15 minutes;
- Rinse with clean water; and
- Either air dry equipment and utensils, or dry with single use paper towels.

Washing Up Items Heavily Soiled with Grease and Burnt On Food (e.g. fryers, grills, saucepans etc.)

These items can normally be cleaned using hot water and detergent. However with cold water, it

is recommended that heavier duty alkaline or chlorinated alkaline detergents are used.

If you are using stronger chemical cleaners than usual, ensure that you and your staff wear gloves, protective clothing, closed shoes and goggles.

Washing Up Using a Dishwasher if Electricity is Available

Some domestic and commercial dishwashers are designed to either:

- draw hot water from the mains; (these can only be used during a disruption to the gas supply if the mains hot water service is electric) or, if there is no hot water available.
- to internally heat the water to the required temperature using an electric coil. Note—this may take longer than normal and be more expensive.

However, for items that are heavily soiled with grease or burnt on food it is preferable to use the dish washer so that the hot water activates the detergent solution and breaks down the grease at 65°C and sanitises at a temperature of 82°C during the final rinse cycle.

Ensure the dish washer is not overloaded as this will hinder effective cleaning and sanitising.

Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene in the absence of hot water can be maintained by washing hands with suitable soap and water.

Use disposable cloths such as nappy wipes for cleaning babies.

Clothes Washing

Clothes washing should be with detergents suitable for use in cold water.

Nappy Washing

Nappy washing services will not be operating. Alternative measures include the provision of disposable nappies by the centre or requesting that parents provide disposable nappies during the time that their child is in care.

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