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**I taught a program on dehydrating meat into beef jerky this morning at a summer day camp. I was surprised how many youth did not know the hazard of cross-contamination when preparing food. Do you realize what happens if cooked meat, fish, poultry or game is placed on one platter where juice from the uncooked item remains? Read the following recommendations to avoid cross-contamination of the foods you prepare.**

### **Avoid Sources of Contamination**

- Clean the inside of the refrigerator frequently, including surfaces and crisper drawers.
- Wash countertops and utensils after preparing food.
- Clean and sanitize your food preparation sink often.
- When laundering kitchen towels, wash in hot water.
- Sanitize sponges often by running them through the dishwasher (if it has a sanitizing cycle) or briefly heating them (2 minutes) in the microwave oven (wet the sponge first). Change sponges frequently.
- Replace cutting boards when they develop numerous cracks and crevices.

### **Prevent Cross-Contamination from Raw Meat, Poultry, and Seafood**

- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from other food, especially ready-to-eat foods like salad greens, fruit, and bread.
- Do not wash meat and poultry before cooking. Doing so can spread bacteria that are present on the surface of the meat, contaminating other areas.
- Use one cutting board for raw meat and another one for fruits and vegetables.

- If only one cutting board is available, cut fruits, vegetables, and anything that will be eaten without cooking first. Cut raw meat, poultry, and seafood last.
- After cutting raw meat, wash cutting boards, dishes, countertops, and knives with hot, soapy water. Sanitize them with an antibacterial substance, such as a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per 1 gallon of water.

### **Prevent Cross-Contamination from Fruits and Vegetables**

- Wash fruits and vegetables under cool tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Scrub firm produce, like potatoes, with a clean brush. Also see FCS8746 Underground Vegetables: Safe Handling Practices for Consumers.
- Do not use detergent or soap to wash produce.
- Cut off damaged or bruised areas on hard fruits and vegetables, such as apples and potatoes.
- If soft fruit and vegetables such as tomatoes or citrus have damaged or spotted areas, throw them away.