

HOME FOOD SAFETY MYTHBUSTERS

Home Food Safety Mythbusters Story: Kids in the Kitchen

The Lane family was looking forward to attending the Greenwood County community picnic. Mrs. Lane was making her famous chocolate chip cookies for the occasion. She usually loved being in the kitchen with her kids, but recent bad news had her preoccupied. A neighborhood boy had been hospitalized with E.coli. The doctor said it was from something he ate that contained foodborne pathogens. Mrs. Lane was horrified that something like that could happen because of food. She began wondering if she was doing things in her own home that might be putting her kids at risk for food poisoning. Luckily, she discovered www.fightbac.org and spent some time learning about ways she could prevent food poisoning from happening in her home.

Mrs. Lane gazed longingly into a big bowl of raw cookie dough as the oven pre-heated. As she contemplated sneaking a spoonful, she noticed her daughter Chloe staring at her and licking her lips. The sight of Chloe reminded Mrs. Lane of what she had learned about food safety at www.fightbac.org.

As if on cue, Mr. Lane walked in and made a beeline towards the bowl, finger at the ready. Just in time, Mrs. Lane whacked his hand away with a wooden spoon.

“Don’t you dare!” squeaked Mrs. Lane.

“Ouch! Come on Hun, just one lick? It can’t be that bad!” said Mr. Lane, seeing his wife with her hands on her hips.

Mrs. Lane took her husband aside, “You need to set a good example! Chloe is more vulnerable to food poisoning than you are. I’m not taking any chances! Look at what happened to our neighbor! No raw cookie dough for either of you.”

Reminded of the sickness that could follow, Mrs. Lane was set on not sampling any cookie dough. Just in case, she thought it would be best if she and her daughter filled their bellies up with an

early lunch to quell any cravings while the oven was pre-heating.

“Chloe why don’t you go grab something from the freezer we can pop in the microwave?” she asked her daughter.

Chloe returned clutching frozen lasagna. “Mommy how long should I put this in the microwave for?”

“Oh I’d say about 3 mins...” Mrs. Lane trailed off as she remembered something she read. “Actually sweetheart, why don’t you read the package instructions out loud? Following the instructions is really the only way to make sure you cook the food safely.”

Mrs. Lane was just pulling her freshly baked cookies out of the oven when her son, Russell, entered the kitchen with expert timing. His unwashed hand was stretched out to snatch a cookie.

“Russell, those cookies are piping hot AND I did not see you washing your hands!” Mrs. Lane lectured as Russell slunk over to the sink grimacing.

Russell let the water run over his hands for about 5 seconds.

“I didn’t see any suds!” Mrs. Lane began

as Russell rolled his eyes. “There could be any number of germs still on your hands if you didn’t use soap. And you need to wash for at least 20 seconds. Now wash your hands PROPERLY while Chloe sings the happy birthday song twice or you aren’t touching any of these cookies!”

“Take it away Chloe!” Mrs. Lane said with a smile.

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Finally, the Lanes were ready to start their hour-long journey to the picnic park. Mrs. Lane knew someone would be complaining about a rumbling tummy in no time.

“Jon, can you grab something to snack on in the car....something healthy?” she yelled to her husband.

He returned with a plastic package full of sliced apples. “Ok let’s go...we’re going to be late!” he said, shooing her out of the door.

“Just one second...” she said, reading the label. She saw it was clearly marked “ready to eat” and knew that it should be safe.

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Mrs. Lane couldn’t believe her luck when she found an iPhone app on <http://www.fightbac.org> called Perfect Picnic. Players buy a park lot and stock it with the supplies necessary for a delicious and safe cookout. She listened to the catchy theme song as both of her kids played with the game on the way to their own perfect picnic. They were perfectly silent as they built their parks and kept their virtual visitors healthy. Mrs. Lane couldn’t have been happier!

Discussion Questions:

1. Was Mrs. Lane correct when she said that her young daughter Chloe was more vulnerable to food poisoning?
2. It turned out that the package instructions on Chloe’s lasagna required 6 minutes of microwave cook time. What might have happened if Chloe had only heated it for 3 minutes?
3. Would Russell have been clean if he had let his hands run under tap water without soap for another 20 seconds?
4. What would Mrs. Lane need to do if she did not find “ready-to-eat,” “washed,” or “triple washed” on the packaging of the sliced apples?