



The Home Food Safety MBA (Mastery of the “Mealtime Balancing Act”!)

7 Steps for Highly Effective Mealtime Multitasking

Got a minute? Probably not, if you're like the nearly two out of three Americans who sometimes find themselves too busy to take the time to sit down and eat. But in your efforts to maximize time, you may be taking shortcuts that can give harmful bacteria the competitive edge! Whether you're a dashboard diner, laptop luncher or hurried home cook, outsmart foodborne illness with advice from the American Dietetic Association



Keep Your Cool.

Of the nearly half of working Americans who bring a packed lunch from home, almost one in four say they do not store their lunch in a refrigerator or cooler when they get to work. With sometimes up to six hours passing between the time lunches are packed at home until they are eaten, this is definitely not a healthy habit! Be the boss of your brown bag and make sure to store it in a refrigerator (set *below* 40°F) as soon as you get to work. Or, pack your lunch in an insulated lunch bag or cooler — and throw in a frozen ice pack to ensure the safety of perishable foods.



Always Be Prepared.

For the 30 percent of mealtime multitaskers who dine while driving, handheld foods are the way to go. According to the survey, fast food tops the list of portable favorites (55 percent), followed by candy (34 percent), chips/crackers (33 percent), granola/energy bars (24 percent) and meat/cheese sandwiches (16 percent). If you're a frequent in-car diner, be sure to keep a supply of moist towelettes or bottles of hand sanitizer close by so you can clean up quickly before digging in.

Make a Clean Break Between Tasks.

Survey results show men who multitask while preparing meals are more likely to occupy their time watching TV, working on the computer or reading the newspaper, while women typically combine meal preparation with washing dishes, talking on the phone and cleaning the refrigerator or kitchen. But according to the survey, nearly a third of these mealtime multitaskers do not regularly wash their hands between activities while preparing food. Since handwashing is the easiest way to prevent the spread of harmful bacteria, take time to lather up between household tasks.



Follow the Rules.

Watching TV is the preferred activity for more than nine out of 10 Americans who say they multitask while eating meals at home. Next time you roll out the TV tray for dinner, remember the two hour rule and make sure leftover food doesn't sit out of refrigeration for longer than two hours (in hot weather of 90°F or above, this time is reduced to one hour). For an easy reminder, set a kitchen timer *before* you sit down to eat.



Get the Right Tools for the Job.

According to the ADA survey, nine out of 10 Americans prepare a main meat dish for dinner often or most of the time. Next time meat is on your menu, make sure you're fully equipped to cook it safely. Keep a meat thermometer handy so you can quickly check to make sure meats are cooked to a proper internal temperature. For a fast reference, download a list of temperatures for all of your favorite meat dishes from www.homefoodsafety.org (click on the Grillometer).



Never Go in “Cold.”

If most Americans can't find time to sit down and eat a meal, odds are they have trouble making time to reheat meals, too! If leftovers are your bag, make sure you reheat them to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit to ensure their safety the second time around — whether you're heating them up in a microwave or in a conventional oven.

ADA survey conducted by Impulse Research, August 2004.