

Occupations and Workplaces

Cooks

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What does a cook do?

The main duties of cooks in restaurants, hotels, healthcare facilities and schools include the following:

- Plan and prepare menus, and determine food portions and quantities needed.
- Pay attention to special dietary needs, if applicable.
- Monitor and order supplies.
- Clean up the kitchen or work area.
- Supervise kitchen staff.

What are some health and safety issues for cooks?

Working with food presents its own unique set of potential hazards. Some of the main ones are:

- Handling raw meat and poultry.
- Exposure to various [chemicals](#), which may include paints, solvents, [pesticides](#), [perfumes](#), or [cleaning products](#).
- Working in [awkward positions](#) or performing [repetitive manual tasks](#).
- Excessive [standing](#).
- [Lifting](#) or carrying heavy trays.

- Risk of radiation leaks from [microwave ovens](#).
 - Working in [extreme temperatures](#).
 - Working with [knives](#), mincers, and other dangerous tools or equipment.
 - Risk of burns or fire from ovens, deep-fat fryers, and steam from pots.
 - [Slips, trips and falls](#).
 - [Stress](#).
 - [Bullying](#).
 - [Working alone](#).
 - Fire.
 - [Fatigue](#) or other health effects of [shift work](#) or [extended work days](#).
 - [Electrical hazards](#).
 - [Carbon monoxide](#).
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What are some preventive measures for cooks?

- [Wash hands](#) frequently with soap and water.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Know how to work with all equipment and tools required for the job.
- Keep the work area tidy.
- Do not exceed the capacity of the shelves when storing food or supplies.
- Conduct regular inspections of the equipment and identify defects. Have equipment removed from service until fixed or replaced.
- Take breaks. Change tasks to reduce repetitive strain injuries.
- Establish [good housekeeping](#) practices.
- Learn safe handling and storage procedures before working with [hazardous products](#) or [consumer chemical products](#).
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including [safety shoes](#) with non-skid soles and [eye protection](#).
- Keep a [first-aid](#) kit within easy access.
- Learn [fire safety](#) and emergency evacuation procedures, including how to assist customers when evacuating.

- Do not block fire exits and fire extinguishers.
 - Keep a mobile phone or other alternative means to contact a designated person when working alone.
 - Know how to [report hazards](#).
 - Do not plug in electrical appliances if touching a wet surface.
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What are some good general safe work practices?

- Practice safe [lifting](#) techniques.
 - Find ways to minimize [musculoskeletal disorders](#) on the job.
 - Inspect the work area and equipment before each shift.
 - Exercise caution when working with knives and other sharp equipment.
 - Store tools in the designated areas after use.
 - Use, maintain and store personal [protective equipment](#) according to manufacturers' recommendations.
 - Follow company safety rules.
 - Follow [good housekeeping](#) procedures.
 - Participate in [WHMIS](#) education and training. Follow [labels](#) and read the safety data sheet ([SDS](#)) for any hazardous product that you use and follow recommended safety precautions.
 - Practice proper [food and kitchen hygiene](#).
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Fact sheet last revised: 2025-02-05

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