

# Americans Need Help Managing “Mealtime Multitasking”

(NAPSA)—“Multitasking” is a term that may have started in the office, but now it’s made its way to the kitchen—where more and more Americans say their busy lives require them to multitask while eating and preparing food. But while juggling multiple tasks at once may be helpful in climbing the corporate ladder, when it comes to mealtime, survey results show most of us take shortcuts that can lead to foodborne illness.

According to a new survey conducted by the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation, nine out of 10 Americans say they multitask while preparing meals, and many say they are too busy to even sit down and eat most or some of the time. What keeps us preoccupied? Most say they multitask in order to maximize personal time, while others cite increased family and work demands as activities that divide their time.

“Most of us are so over-extended that we just squeeze in a meal without really paying attention to whether we’re preparing foods safely,” says registered dietitian Jackie Newgent, national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods *Home Food Safety...It’s in Your Hands*® program. “Since eliminating the need to multitask can be impossible, families should incorporate proper home food safety habits into their daily routines to diminish the risk of foodborne illness.”

## Organize Your “To-Do” List

According to the ADA/ConAgra Foods survey, the top three activities home cooks juggle while cooking include watching television (73 percent), washing dishes (70 percent) and talking on the phone (62 percent). Other activities that coincide with meal preparation range from working on the computer (38 percent) to cleaning the refrigerator or kitchen (36 percent) and petting the dog or cat (20 percent).

But while mealtime multitaskers may have their hands full,



those hands may not always be clean: Survey results show nearly one in three home cooks do not consistently wash their hands while preparing food. Hands are a common transmitter for bacteria, so remember to wash hands often when handling foods.

Newgent recommends developing a system to keep track of food preparation to help over-extended families manage their home food safety “to-dos.” For those who typically prepare meat dishes for dinner, Newgent suggests using color-coded cutting boards and utensils to prevent cross-contamination. “Designate one color for raw meats and another color for ready-to-eat foods—and be consistent,” advises Newgent. “Also, keep a meat thermometer in a drawer next to the oven so you easily can make sure meats are cooked to a proper internal temperature.”

## Manage Your Time

For other mealtime multitaskers, “eating” is just one more item on their daily office agenda. According to the ADA/ConAgra Foods survey, more than two-thirds of Americans say they typically eat lunch (35 percent) or snack throughout the day (30 percent) at their desks. But while these desktop diners may stay on top of their workload, survey results show most need help managing their brown bags.

“It’s easy to lose track of time when you’re at work and forget the two-hour rule for perishable food items—so make it easy on

yourself!” says Newgent. “Before you even sit down at your desk, put your lunch in your workplace refrigerator.” Or, pack your lunch in an insulated lunch bag—and throw in a frozen ice pack to keep foods cold.

## Pay Attention To Details

Mealtime multitasking isn’t exclusive to home and the office; more than a quarter of Americans juggle mealtimes with driving. Yet when multitaskers hit the road, they often forget the number-one rule for home food safety—handwashing. And with most car-friendly foods of the handheld variety, this means many dashboard diners could be flirting with disaster.

According to the ADA/ConAgra Foods survey, most Americans do not consistently wash their hands after pumping gas. Nor do the majority of drivers keep moist towelettes or hand sanitizer in the car to wash up before digging in. Next time you dine “a la car,” avoid spreading bacteria from the gas pump to your portable feast by stocking your glove box with miniature bottles of hand sanitizer, moist towelettes or even a tub of antibacterial wipes so you can clean up, even on the go.

## Talk To The Pros About Home Food Safety

The ADA/ConAgra Foods *Home Food Safety...It’s in Your Hands*® program educates consumers that home food safety is a serious issue and provides solutions so Americans can easily and safely handle food in their own kitchens. This program complements government-sponsored food safety initiatives that speak to the leading critical food-handling violations by emphasizing the following four key messages: 1) Wash hands often; 2) Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate; 3) Cook to proper temperatures; 4) Refrigerate promptly below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

For more information, visit [www.homefoodsafety.org](http://www.homefoodsafety.org).