

What do you do in your kitchen?

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Understanding what people do in their kitchens and why will inform thinking about how to reduce the burden from illness caused by food prepared and eaten at home, according to a new report by University of Hertfordshire researchers on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The new report, called Kitchen Life, offers detailed insights for the first time into how people interact with their pets and their kitchens and how this might influence foodborne illness. With an estimated one million cases of foodborne illness each year in the UK which results in 200,000 [hospital admissions](#) and 500 deaths (FSA 2011) and costing an estimated £1.9 billion (FSA 2012), food safety in the home is a key focus of the FSA's Foodborne Disease Strategy for 2010-2015.

Dr Wendy Wills, Reader in Food and Public Health at the University of Hertfordshire's Centre for Research in Primary and Community Care (CRIPACC), said: "Our research found that kitchen life was a complex business – many [household activities](#) took place in the kitchen which had little to do with [food preparation](#) or eating but these were tangled up with activities that *were* food-related. These new insights into how people use their kitchen spaces highlight potential pathways which might lead to foodborne illness.

Dr Wills continued: "Domestic kitchens are used not only for food preparation but also for other non-food related activities such as pet care, school and office work, gardening and bicycle repairs. These blurred boundaries on the use of a kitchen together with varied cleaning

practices might lead to food safety and cross-contamination issues."

The study investigated the kitchen lives of people aged under sixty years, including some who were pregnant, and people who were sixty and older. The [kitchen](#) practices of those aged over sixty and pregnant women are of particular interest to the FSA as these groups are vulnerable to foodborne illness. The findings suggest that people aged sixty or eighty years or above in the study had more factors working against them in their kitchens and this might mean they are at greater risk of becoming ill.

The Kitchen Life report brings domestic kitchens to life through a close up examination of actual practices. These insights present an opportunity for fresh or renewed thinking about food safety policy - supporting the FSA's policies about effective [food safety](#) in the home.

Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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