

Food Safety at Home

Most people do not think about food-borne illness until they become ill from unknowingly consuming contaminated food. While the food supply in the United States is one of the safest in the world, CDC estimates that each year 76 million cases of food-borne illness occur and more than 300,000 persons are hospitalized and 5,000 die from food-borne illness.

Safe food handling and preparation are important in protecting against food-borne illnesses. Four simple steps will go a long way toward reducing the risk of food-borne illness for you and your family.

- **Clean:** Wash hands and surfaces often;
- **Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate;
- **Cook:** Cook to proper temperatures;
- **Chill:** Refrigerate promptly.

The first step to preparing food safely is to **CLEAN hands and surfaces often**. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get on hands, cutting boards, knives, and countertops. Frequent cleaning can keep that from happening. To stop the spread of pathogens and prevent food-borne illnesses follow these important guidelines:

1. Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
2. Run cutting boards and utensils through the dishwasher or wash them in hot soapy water after each use.
3. Keep countertops clean by washing with hot soapy water after preparing food.

The second step to preparing food safely is to **SEPARATE: Don't cross-contaminate one food with another**. Cross-contamination occurs when pathogenic bacteria is spread from a food to a surface, from a surface to another food, or from one food to another. Ways to prevent cross-contamination:

1. Use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and another for salads and ready-to-eat food.
2. Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood and their juices apart from other food items in your grocery cart.
3. Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood in a container or on a plate so juices can't drip on other foods.

The third step is to **COOK foods to proper temperatures**. Foods are safe when they are heated long enough and at a temperature high enough to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Even for experienced cooks, the improper heating and preparation of food means bacteria can survive.

1. Use a food thermometer - you can't tell food is cooked safely by how it looks.
2. Stir, rotate the dish, and cover food when microwaving to prevent cold spots where bacteria can survive.
3. Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.

Safe Cooking Temperatures as measured with a food thermometer	Internal Temperature
Ground Beef	160°F
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	145°F
Poultry	165°F
Fresh Pork	160°F
Eggs & Egg Dishes	


Safe Cooking Temperatures as measured with a food thermometer	Internal Temperature
Eggs	Cook until yolk & white are firm
Egg dishes	160°F
Seafood	145°F
Leftovers & Casseroles	165°F

The fourth and final step is to **CHILL: Refrigerate foods promptly**. Cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria. Bacteria spreads fastest at temperatures between 40 °F - 140 °F, so chilling food properly is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

1. Cool the fridge to 40 °F or below, and use an appliance thermometer to check the temperature.
2. Chill leftovers and takeout foods within 2 hours, and divide food into shallow containers for rapid cooling.
3. Thaw meat, poultry, and seafood in the fridge, not on the counter, and don't overstuff the fridge.


More Information of Food Safety

[Fight BAC!® and the Partnership for Food Safety Education](#) 

See especially the many articles and brochures in the [For Consumers](#)  area. Get a safe-cooking temperature chart; learn the best settings for your refrigerator, safe frozen food thawing times, and more.

[Gateway to Government Food Safety Information](#) 

FoodSafety.gov is a gateway website that provides links to selected government food safety-related information.

[USDA Food Safety Education](#)  The Food Safety and Inspection Service page for consumers about the importance of safe food handling and how to reduce the risks associated with food borne illness including a large collection of [Food Safety Fact Sheets](#).

[Food Safety Project - Iowa State University Extension](#)

Iowa State University Extension believes that resources are needed for consumers, foodservice operators, students and educators to access research-based, unbiased information on food safety and quality. The goal of the Food Safety Project is to develop educational materials that give the public the tools they need to minimize their risk of foodborne illness.

For more information contact:

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