

Food Safely

When it comes to preventing food born illness, there are four simple steps to food safety that you can practice every day. These steps are easy – and they'll help protect you and those around you from harmful food born bacteria.

- **CLEAN:** Clean hands and surfaces often

Germs that cause food born illness can be spread throughout the kitchen and get onto hands from cutting boards, utensils, counter tops, and food. Help stop the spread of these germs! Here's how:

Clean your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based wipe or hand gel.

Wash your cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you prepare the next food.

Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often using the hot cycle of your washing machine. If using a sponge to clean up, microwave it each evening for 30 seconds or place it in the dishwasher.

Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water. This includes those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. For firm-skin fruits and vegetables, rub with your hands or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing.

- **SEPARATE:** Don't cross-contaminate one food with another

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria spread from a food to a surface . . . from a surface to another food . . . or from one food to another. You're helping to prevent cross-contamination when you:

Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery cart, grocery bags, and in your refrigerator. Be sure to use the plastic bags available in the meat and produce sections of the supermarket.

Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a different one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.

Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.

Don't allow juices from meat, seafood, poultry, or eggs to drip on other foods in the refrigerator.

Use containers to keep these foods from touching other foods.

Never re-use marinades that were used on raw food, unless you bring them to a boil first.

- **COOK:** Cook foods to proper temperatures

Foods are safely cooked when they are heated for a long-enough time and at a high-enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborn illness. The target temperature is different for different foods.

The only way to know for sure that meat is cooked to a safe temperature is to use a food thermometer. Make sure it reaches the temperature recommended for each specific food.

- **CHILL:** Refrigerate foods promptly

Cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria. So, refrigerate foods quickly. Do not over-stuff the refrigerator, as cold air must circulate to help keep food safe.

Keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of 40° F or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of food born illness. Use an appliance thermometer to be sure the temperature is consistently 40° F or below.

The freezer temperature should be 0° F or below.

Plan when you shop: Buy perishable foods such as dairy products, fresh meat and hot cooked foods at the end of your shopping trip. Refrigerate foods as soon as possible to extend their storage life. Don't leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.
If preparing picnic foods, be sure to include an ice pack to keep cold foods cold.
Store leftovers properly.