



## Keeping Food Safe

How safe is your food? Have you ever suffered from the “24 hour flu”? Chances are it was not the flu, but rather a case of foodborne illness—or “food poisoning”—from eating contaminated foods. When food is not handled properly, microorganisms that cause foodborne illnesses can contaminate it. These include bacteria, viruses, parasites, and molds. All can cause serious illnesses, but bacteria are the most common culprits. Symptoms of foodborne illness include nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, and mild fever, these symptoms can occur within half an hour of eating “bad” food to a few days or a few weeks later. While unpleasant for anyone, foodborne illness can be particularly dangerous for older adults, people with weakened immune systems, infants and children, and pregnant women.



In the U.S., we can feel confident that the food we purchase has been handled properly and is safe to eat. However, as consumers, we all need to know how to identify potentially unsafe foods and how to keep our food safe.

What do you do?

**Circle YES, NO, or SOMETIMES** in response to each statement.

When grocery shopping, I pick up refrigerated and frozen foods just before checking out.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I check the “sell by” or “use by” dates on packages when shopping or eating.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
When I bring my groceries home, I refrigerate cold foods immediately.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I wash my hands with soap and water before I prepare food.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I keep raw meat or poultry juice away from other foods, either by using separate cutting boards and utensils or washing these with soap and hot water between uses.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES



I always thaw frozen meats in the refrigerator.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I rinse produce (even bagged greens) thoroughly before serving.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
After preparing foods, I keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I refrigerate my leftovers immediately.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
Spoiled leftover food does not always smell, taste, or look bad---when in doubt, I throw it out!	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
I keep kitchen towels and sponges clean.	YES	NO	SOMETIMES



**Keys to safe food handling:**

- Buy cold food last, get it home fast.
- Keep food safe—refrigerate.
- Keep everything clean.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator.
- Cook foods thoroughly.
- Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold.
- Don't wait—refrigerate leftovers promptly.
- When in doubt, throw it out. Wash hands with soap and water.

Download “Be Safe: A Home Guide to Help Keep Food Safe” for the “right” answers and information on keeping food safe--

<http://www2.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/FN-5.pdf>

Visit our Nutrition Education for Wellness (NEW) website at

<http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/NEW/>.