

# Be Safe

## A HOME GUIDE TO HELP KEEP FOOD SAFE

This guide contains recommendations on how you can keep your food safe and avoid foodborne illness. Storing, preparing, cooking, serving, and handling foods properly can greatly reduce your chances of getting sick; so **BE SAFE**.

Foodborne illness, often called "food poisoning," results from eating contaminated foods. When food is not handled properly, microorganisms that cause foodborne illness 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. What some thought was the flu might actually have been foodborne illness. A foodborne illness may develop within half an hour to a few days, while some may occur as long as two or more weeks after eating contaminated food.

While a case of foodborne illness is unpleasant for anyone, it can be particularly dangerous for older adults, people with weakened immune systems, infants and children, and pregnant women. Fortunately, **FOODBORNE ILLNESS IS PREVENTABLE**. Follow this guide to help keep your food safe.



### Here are the keys to safe food handling:

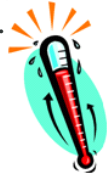
- Buy cold foods last, get them home fast.
- Keep food safe--refrigerate.
- Keep everything clean.
- Wash your hands.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator.
- Cook foods thoroughly.
- Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold.
- Don't wait--refrigerate leftovers.
- When in doubt, throw it out.

If you filled out the questionnaire (*on page 4*) before reading this, look for the stars (☆) in the paragraphs on the following pages - mark the information you need to know to give the "right" answers to the questionnaire.

## 1 *Buying food:*

Buy cold foods last, get them home fast.

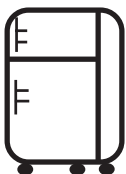
- Shop for frozen, refrigerated foods, and hot items from the deli last, just before going to the checkout counter. ☆
- Make sure frozen foods feel rock solid and refrigerated foods feel cold.
- Check the "sell-by" or "pull" date (how long the grocer can keep the produce for sale on the shelf) and "use-by" date (how long you can keep the product at home at its best quality) on packages before you buy. ☆
- When you check-out, be sure that your raw meats, poultry and seafood are placed in separate bags to prevent the transfer of juices and bacteria.
- Use a cooler with coolants for perishable foods while you transport your foods home.



## 2 *Storing food:*

Keep food safe--refrigerate!

- Upon arriving home from shopping, unload the perishable foods first, going directly from the car to the refrigerator or freezer. ☆
- If a product does not have a date on it, write the purchase date on it before you refrigerate or freeze it.
- Keep the refrigerator temperature between 34°F and 40°F. The freezer should be at or below 0°F.
- Space items in the refrigerator and freezer so the cold air can freely circulate.
- Use fresh meat within 3 to 4 days. Fresh poultry, ground meat, and fish should be used within 1 to 2 days.
- To keep raw meat, poultry, and fish juices from dripping onto other foods, wrap them and:



- place in separate bags in the meat drawer OR
- place on a plate on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator.

## 3 *Preparing food:*

Keep everything clean.

Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before starting any food preparation. If you stop to do something else, like use the bathroom, change a diaper, blow your nose, or touch a pet, be sure to wash your hands again before continuing food preparation. ☆
- Bandage any cuts or sores on your hands and use plastic gloves.
- Make sure all kitchen helpers have clean hands too.
- Plan ahead and thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator. Place frozen foods on a plate or in a plastic bag on the lowest shelf in the refrigerator to collect any juices and moisture. ☆
- For faster thawing, place food in a leakproof plastic bag and immerse in cold water. Change water every 30 minutes. Cook food immediately after thawing.
- To thaw in a microwave oven, place frozen food in a microwave-safe container and defrost on "low" or "defrost" setting. Finish cooking food immediately after thawing.
- Clean work surfaces often to remove food particles and spills. Use paper towels to wipe up spilled meat, poultry or fish juice, then use a \*sanitizing solution.
- Rinse all produce thoroughly before eating.
- Never chop vegetables, salad ingredients, or other ready-to-eat foods on a cutting board that was used for raw meat or poultry without first cleaning and sanitizing it. ☆
- After cutting raw meat, poultry or seafood, wash cutting board and utensils with hot, soapy water and \*sanitize. ☆
- Change kitchen towels often and launder in hot water. Clean sponges and dishcloths frequently, using soap and hot water. Disinfect in a \*sanitizing solution; soak for two minutes; rinse and air dry. Do this once a week or more often as needed. ☆

\* Sanitizing solution: One tablespoon liquid bleach and one gallon water

## 4 *Cooking food:* Cook it thoroughly.

- Never partially cook foods and then refrigerate or set them aside to finish cooking later.
- Cook meat (especially ground meat), poultry, and fish thoroughly. Use a meat or instant-read thermometer to check internal temperature. Use this chart as a guide:

<b>Product</b>	<b>Internal, cooked temperature (°F)</b>
All cooked leftovers (reheated) .....	165°
Poultry (whole bird) .....	165°
Poultry (breast, thigh, wing) .....	165°
Ground poultry .....	165°
Ground meat (beef, pork, veal, lamb) .....	160°
Egg dishes .....	160°
Fish .....	145°
* Beef, Veal, or Lamb .....	145°
* Pork or Ham.....	145°

\* *Cook whole cuts of meat (beef, veal, lamb, pork, ham) to an internal temperature of 145°, then allow the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or consuming.*

## 5 *Serving food:* Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold.

- Do not leave perishable food out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- For buffets, put hot foods over a heat source, and cold foods on ice. Do not mix fresh (unserved) food with food that has already been out for serving. ☆
- If you will be away from home, pack food in an insulated container or cooler with coolants or ice. Keep it away from direct sunlight.

## 6 *Handling leftovers:* Don't wait...refrigerate!

- Refrigerate foods within 2 hours after cooking or preparing. ☆
- Put food in shallow containers for quicker cooling.
- Freeze leftovers that will not be eaten within 2 days, and make sure to date the container or bag.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F or until steaming hot. Boil leftover soups, sauces and gravies for at least 1 minute before serving.
- Unsafe food does not always smell, taste or look bad. ***When in doubt, throw it out.*** ☆

### How to sanitize food-preparation surfaces

First, clean surface with hot, soapy water and rinse.  
Then, do the following:

#### For hard, non-porous surfaces:

- Use 1 Tbsp. liquid bleach\*\* in 1 gallon of water.
- Leave wet for 2 minutes.
- Do not rinse; allow to air-dry.

#### vs. For porous surfaces:

- Use 3 Tbsp. liquid bleach\*\* in 1 gallon of water.
- Leave wet for 2 minutes.
- Rinse and wipe dry or air-dry.

\*\*Keep all cleaning products away from children. Do not mix liquid bleach with other cleaning products such as toilet cleaners or ammonia.

# 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 before I handle 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 meat in the refrigerator. .... 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