

Food Safety Facts

Every year, millions of people may experience one or more episodes of foodborne illness, without ever knowing that it was food that caused their illness. Generally, these illnesses are preventable if safe food handling practices are followed. Below are some facts and tips to teach you the basics of food safety. Make sure that you and your family aren't victims of preventable foodborne illness!

#1

Keep Hot Foods Hot!

Example of hot foods

If a food is cooked and put out to serve, make sure that you keep the food hot if it is not going to be eaten right away. If you are going to cool the food in the refrigerator, be sure to cool it quickly in a shallow container. Perishable food should never be kept at temperatures between 40°F and 140°F for more than 2 hours. Bacteria can grow well at these temperatures and may grow to levels that could cause illness.

#2

Keep Cold Foods Cold!

Cold salads, lunchmeats, dairy products and other foods which require refrigeration should always be kept cold (below 40°F). If they are allowed to warm up, bacteria may be able to grow to dangerous levels.

Example of cold foods

#3

Our hands naturally carry bacteria on them. If we transfer that bacteria to food, the food is a good place for those bacteria to grow! On the other hand, foods contain a certain amount of bacteria on them as well, especially raw foods. It is important not to let the bacteria from raw foods stay on your hands where you may transfer them to your mouth or other foods.

#4

Don't Cross Contaminate!

You cook meat and poultry thoroughly to kill the harmful bacteria that may be on

them. That is why it is very important to make sure that you don't allow the juices associated with raw meat and poultry to contaminate other areas of your kitchen. If you do, you may then allow those bacteria to get onto foods that don't get cooked before you eat them.

Cutting board with meats and vegetables

#5

Thaw Foods Safely!

Refrigerator

Frozen raw meat and poultry should never be thawed by leaving them on the counter at room temperature. The proper way to thaw such products is to either thaw them in the refrigerator or thaw them in a microwave oven.

#6

Wash Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Thoroughly!

Because fresh fruits and vegetables are grown outside, they may come in contact with a wide range of bacteria. Most of these bacteria are harmless, but it is important to realize that fresh fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly under running water before you consume them.

Vegetables

#7

Keep Eggs Refrigerated and Never Eat Raw Eggs!

Eggs

Eggs may contain the bacteria Salmonella in their yolks, and so it is very important never to leave eggs at room temperature, or you will allow the Salmonella to multiply and grow. Because there may be Salmonella in eggs, you should also always make sure that you cook your eggs thoroughly before eating them. This means no runny yellow yolks, and it also means not eating any cookie or cake batters made with raw eggs!

#8

Cook Ground Beef Thoroughly!

E. coli O157:H7 is a pathogenic bacteria that may be present in raw ground meat. Because of this it is important that

hamburgers and other ground meat products be cooked thoroughly to kill this bacteria. Ground beef must reach an internal temperature of 160°F in order to ensure that the bacteria E. coli O157:H7 has been killed. The interior of the meat may turn brown before this temperature is reached, making it look like the hamburger is done, but you cannot assure its safety until the temperature reaches 160°F.

Hamburger and Bacteria

#9

When In Doubt, Throw It Out!

Trash Can

Never taste food which you think may be spoiled. If you are uncertain as to whether or not a food is still safe to eat, do not eat it. Even reheating foods cannot destroy the toxins of some bacteria if a food has been handled incorrectly. Never eat canned food if the can is bulging or looks like it has had a leak. The consequences of foodborne illness are not worth the money you will save trying to salvage the food!



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