



FOOD SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

Safe Food Handling Practices



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 6, or 48 million Americans contract a foodborne illness each year. Of those that become sick, nearly 128,000 people will be hospitalized and 3,000 will die as a result of their illness. There are some easy and effective steps you can take to help lessen your chance of contracting a foodborne illness.

CLEANLINESS

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling food for at least 20 seconds. Humming “happy birthday” twice while washing hands is a good way to ensure you are washing long enough.
- Scrub cutting boards with hot, soapy water after preparing each item and before moving on to the next food. If your cutting board has deep groves or cut marks which make it difficult to clean, consider replacing it.
- After washing your utensils and cutting boards with soap and water, rinsing them with a bleach solution (made of one tablespoon of unscented liquid bleach diluted in one gallon of water) will provide effective sanitation action.
- Cover any cuts or skin abrasions on your hands to avoid contaminating the food.
- Keep pets and household chemicals away from food preparation areas.



PREVENT CROSS CONTAMINATION

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate.
- Use separate cutting boards and knives for chopping ready to eat produce and raw meats.
- Never rinse raw poultry because it spreads germs around the kitchen sink, which can serve as a source of contamination for other foods.
- Discard used marinades.
- Use clean utensils and plates to remove cooked foods from grills and pans. Never place cooked foods back into the dish which held the raw or uncooked foods.
- At the grocery store, separate raw and uncooked meats from ready to eat items. Place raw meats in disposable, plastic bags away from other foods.



- If you use reusable shopping bags for groceries, designate specific bags for meats to avoid cross-contamination. Wash and dry bags as they become soiled.
- Store bags used for groceries at home in a manner which protects them from other sources of contamination such as pets, children, and chemicals.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator in water-tight containers to prevent juices from leaking onto ready-to-eat and cooked foods.

COOKING

- Color is an inaccurate way to determine if meat is sufficiently cooked. Instead, always use an accurate thermometer to measure the final internal temperature of meat and meat products.
- Measure the temperature in the thickest part of the food, ensuring the thermometer does not touch bone or the cooking pan which can give you an inaccurate reading. Be sure to thoroughly wash thermometers after each use.
- Wait until foods are completely cooked before taste testing.
- When using a microwave to cook or reheat food, be sure to rotate or stir the food to facilitate thorough heating. Additionally, some labels recommend a “resting time” for the food after cooking, before it should be served. Those instructions should be followed in order to allow the heat to evenly distribute.



CHILL

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Bacteria can grow in foods kept in the temperature “danger zone” (41°F—135°F) / (5 °C—58 °C) for an extended period of time.
- Refrigerate leftovers to less than 41°F / 5 °C as soon as possible, but definitely within 2 hours.
- Divide large amounts of warm stews, soups and other food items into smaller portions before placing in the refrigerator. Use shallow pans and loosely cover while in the refrigerator to allow warm air to escape and facilitate cooling.
- At the grocery store, select cold foods last and put them away first when you get home, to keep them cold.
- Refrigerated foods that are packaged in hermetically sealed or vacuum packaged containers should always be stored in the refrigerator. Storing these types of vacuum packaged products at room temperature could allow the production of Botulism toxin.
- Always follow package instructions, especially when it comes to keeping foods refrigerated!
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or in a microwave immediately prior to cooking. Never thaw frozen foods on the counter.

