

Fact Sheet

Foodborne Illness

What Consumers Can do to Protect Themselves



Clean

Illness causing bacteria can survive in many places around the kitchen, including hands, utensils, and cutting boards.

- § Wash hands the right way, for 20 seconds with soap and running water. Be sure to scrub the backs of hands, between fingers, and under nails.
- § Wash all fruits and veggies, even bagged products. If you plan to peel fruits and veggies, it is important to wash them first because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside during the handling process.
- § Properly wash surfaces and utensils after each use. Just rinsing utensils, countertops and cutting boards with water won't do enough to stop bacteria from spreading. Clean surfaces and cutting boards with hot soapy water and use a bleach solution as needed.
- § A solution 1 tablespoon of bleach per 1 gallon of water can be used to sanitize dishes, utensils, food preparation counters and tables. *Be sure to use regular, unscented bleach.*

Separate

Even after cleaning hands and surfaces thoroughly, raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can still spread illness-causing bacteria to ready-to-eat foods, unless they are kept separate!

- § Whenever possible use separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils for raw (uncooked) produce and for raw (uncooked) meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs. Otherwise, properly clean and sanitize them.
- § Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods while you are shopping at the grocery store.
- § Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods in the refrigerator, covered and/or wrapped to prevent drips onto other foods.

Cook

While many people think they can tell when food is “done” simply by checking its color and texture, there is no way to be sure it is safe without following a few important but simple steps.

- § Use a food thermometer! Make sure food reaches its safe minimum cooking temperature. For example, internal temperatures should be 145° F for whole meats (allowing meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating), 160°F for ground meats, and 165°F for all poultry. Eggs should be cooked until the yolk is firm. **This is especially important for children, pregnant women, and other at risk individuals.*
- § During meal times, while food is being served and eaten, keep it hot (at 140°F or above). After meals are over, quickly cool the leftovers down and refrigerate.
- § Microwave leftover food thoroughly to 165° F.

Chill

Cold temperatures slow the growth of illness causing bacteria. Refrigerate foods promptly. Bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them, if the temperature is 90°F or higher during the summer, cut that time down to one hour. **When in doubt – throw it out!**



For more sources of information on this topic visit:

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT www.scchealth.co

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT www.michigan.gov/mdard

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION www.cdc.gov

US FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION www.fda.gov

US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE www.usda.gov