

# Food Safety Education Month

[Your Health Matters!](#)



Every year, an estimated 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from eating contaminated food. Anyone can get sick from a foodborne illness (also called food poisoning). But [some groups of people are more likely to get sick](#) and to have a more serious illness. These groups are:

- Adults aged 65 and older
- Children younger than 5
- People with health problems or who take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness
- Pregnant women

There are things you can do to protect yourself and your family. As you prepare and handle food, [follow these steps](#):

**CLEAN: Wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces often when you cook.**

## SEPARATE: Raw Meat, Poultry, Seafood and Eggs from Other Foods

- Harmful bacteria from raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs can spread to other foods if they are not separated properly. This is especially risky when bacteria are spread to foods that are eaten raw, such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

Separate and prevent cross-contamination by taking these steps:

### In the Grocery Store

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your **shopping cart**.
- Place these products in **separate plastic bags** to prevent juices from getting on other foods.
- If you use reusable grocery bags, wash them frequently in the washing machine.

### At Home

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in the **refrigerator**.
- Place them in **containers or sealed plastic bags on the bottom shelf** of the refrigerator.
- If you are not planning to use these foods within a few days, freeze them.

### Safely Marinate

- Sauce that is used to marinate raw meat, poultry or seafood should not be used on cooked food unless it is boiled first to destroy any harmful bacteria



**COOK:** Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to an internal temperature that kills germs.

**Safely cooking food is a matter of temperature.** Foods need to reach a high enough internal temperature to kill bacteria that can cause foodborne illness.

### **Color is Not a Reliable Indicator of Safety**

Color and texture are not reliable indicators of whether food has reached a high enough internal temperature to destroy pathogens.

- According to USDA research, **1 in 4 hamburgers turns brown before reaching a safe internal temperature**

- **The best way to ensure safety is to use a food thermometer.**

### **Check with a Food Thermometer**

- **Use a food thermometer** to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, egg products, leftovers and casseroles are cooked to safe temperatures to destroy any harmful bacteria.
- Compare your thermometer reading to the chart to make sure food has been cooked to a safe temperature.
- Food thermometers should be placed in the **thickest part of food**, making sure not to touch bone, fat or gristle.
- **Clean your food thermometer** with hot water and soap after each use.
- For information about calibrating your food thermometers, check out the

**Review Thermometers and the Food Safety Web page** from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

### **Microwave to Safe Temperatures**

#### **Read and follow package cooking instructions.**

Most prepared convenience foods are not ready to eat right out of the container.

#### **Know when to use a microwave or conventional oven.**

Sometimes proper cooking requires the use of a conventional oven, not a microwave. Some convenience foods may be shaped irregularly or are thicker in some areas and may not cook evenly in a microwave oven. It is important to use the appliance and the method recommended on the label.

#### **Know your microwave wattage before microwaving food.**

If your microwave's wattage is lower than the wattage mentioned in the label's instructions, it will take longer than the instructions say to cook the food to a safe internal temperature.

#### **Always use a food thermometer to ensure a safe internal temperature.**

Use a food thermometer to test food in several places to make sure it has reached a safe internal temperature.

For more information on microwaving foods to safe temperatures, check out the **Cook it Safe!** fact sheet at: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

Chill leftovers within two hours. Chill within one hour if it's above 90°F.

**(LEARN MORE)**

[www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org).

<https://www.eatright.org/homefoodsafety/safety-tips/food-poisoning/food-safety-facts-and-figures>

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodborneburden/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/foodborne-germs.html>

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/food-safety>

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