

## Do you pass the food safety test?

In the home, food safety concerns revolve around three main functions: food storage, food preparation, and cooking. To test your knowledge and see how well you're doing in your own kitchen, take this quiz, and then read on to learn how you can make the meals and snacks from your kitchen the safest possible.

Choose the answer that best describes the practice in your household, whether or not you are the main cook in the house.

### Quiz

**1. My chances of getting food poisoning when living in Australia are:**

- a) One in twenty chances a year
- b) One in ten chances a year
- c) One in five chances a year
- d) No chance

**2. The temperature of the refrigerator in my home is:**

- a) 12 degrees Celsius
- b) 10 degrees Celsius
- c) 8 degrees Celsius
- d) 5 degrees Celsius or less
- e) I don't know. I've never measured it.

**3. Last time we had leftover cooked stew it was:**

- a) Cooled to room temperature, then put in the refrigerator
- b) Put in the refrigerator shortly after the food was served
- c) Covered and put in the refrigerator shortly after the food was served
- d) Left at room temperature overnight or longer

**4. Which foods are most likely to cause food poisoning if cooked or stored incorrectly?  
(You can choose more than one answer)**

- a) Meatloaf
- b) Chicken
- c) Rice salad
- d) Pasta salad
- e) All of the above

**5. I've just used my cutting board to cut raw meat, poultry or fish. Now I want to chop up some vegetables for a salad. I will:**

- a) Use the board as is
- b) Wipe it over with a damp cloth and use it
- c) Wash it with detergent and warm water, dry it and use it
- d) Use a different board

**6. The last time we had hamburgers in my home, I ate mine:**

- a) Rare
- b) Medium
- c) Well-done

**7. I clean my kitchen counters and other surfaces that come in contact with food with:**

- a) Water
- b) Warm water and detergent, then allow to dry
- c) Warm water and detergent, then bleach solution, then allow to dry

**8. When dishes are washed in my home, they are :**

- a) Cleaned by an automatic dishwasher
- b) Left to soak in the sink for several hours and then washed with detergent in the same water
- c) Washed right away with hot water and detergent in the sink and then air-dried
- d) Washed right away with hot water and detergent in the sink and immediately towel-dried with a clean towel

**9. The last time I handled raw meat, poultry or fish, I cleaned my hands afterwards by:**

- a) Wiping them on a towel
- b) Rinsing them under hot, cold or warm tap water
- c) Washing with soap and warm water and drying them thoroughly

**10. Cooked meat, poultry and fish products are defrosted in my home by:**

- a) Setting them on the counter
- b) Placing them in the refrigerator
- c) Defrosting in the microwave

## Answers

1. According to the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA), the chances of getting food poisoning if you live in Australia are one in five. ANZFA estimates that very year over four million Australians get sick from eating contaminated food (at home in many cases) and it costs the community over two and a half billion dollars each year from lost earnings and medical expenses. If you chose answer (c), give yourself 2 points.

2. Refrigerators should operate at 5 degrees Celsius or less, so if you chose answer (d), give yourself two points. If you didn't, you're not alone. According to recent research many people overlook the importance of maintaining an appropriate refrigerator temperature.

Measure the temperature with a thermometer and, if needed, adjust the refrigerator's temperature control dial. A temperature of 5 degrees Celsius or below is important because it slows the growth of most bacteria. The temperature won't kill the bacteria, but it will keep them from multiplying, and the fewer there are, the less likely you are to get sick from them. Freezing food stops bacteria growing. Freezers should operate at minus 18 degrees Celsius or below.

3. Hot food should be refrigerated as soon as possible - as soon as the food has stopped steaming. Avoid leaving it for more than two hours after cooking and don't forget to cover the food. Not only will it keep its quality better, but it prevents other bacteria contaminating it. If you picked answer (c), you get 2 points.

If you've forgotten about food and it has been at room temperature for more than four hours, throw it away.

Leftovers generally remain safe when refrigerated for two to three days. If in doubt, throw it out. It's not worth a food-borne illness for the small amount of food usually involved.

4. If you chose (e) you get four points. Score one point of each of (a), (b), (c) and (d).

Meatloaf, or any other food containing minced meat can cause problems if not cooked right through - with no pink left in the centre. Even if well cooked, bacterial spores can survive, grow and cause food poisoning if not stored correctly

Chicken, especially if it contains stuffing must also be cooked thoroughly - right through the stuffing in the centre to kill bacteria. Again, spores can survive the cooking process and so it must also be stored correctly.

Dishes such as rice salad or pasta salad can be just as dangerous as meat dishes. Dried rice and pasta contain bacteria which produce spores which can survive the cooking process. These bacteria will grow if the salads are then stored at room temperature. Always keep such dishes refrigerated.

5. If answer (c) or (d) best describes your household's practice, give yourself two points.

If you picked (a), you're violating an important food safety rule: Never allow raw meat, poultry and fish to come in contact with other foods. Answer (b) isn't good, either. Insufficient cleaning, such as with a damp cloth, will not remove bacteria or other micro-organisms.

6. You get 2 points if you answered (c) (well done). If you answered (a), you may be putting yourself at risk of food poisoning. Undercooked minced meat can be dangerous as bacteria multiply rapidly in minced meats and if not thoroughly cooked, until the juices run clear and there is no pink left in the centre, will not be destroyed during the cooking process.

7. Either (b) or (c) earns you two points. Water alone may get rid of visible dirt, but is not sufficient to get rid of bacteria. Bleach and similar kitchen sanitising agents can be used occasionally - provided they're diluted according to product directions. Surfaces should also be allowed to dry.

Also, be sure to keep dishcloths and sponges clean and dry between uses because, when wet, these materials harbour bacteria and may promote their growth. You can also soak dishcloths and sponges in diluted bleach or boil them.

8. Answers (a) (c) and (d) are worth two points each. There are potential problems with (b) When you let dishes sit in water for a long time, it creates a soup. The food left on the dish contributes nutrients for bacteria, so the bacteria will multiply. If you do leave dishes to soak, always wash them in clean, hot water with detergent. If you use a tea towel, make sure it is clean and dry.

9. The only correct practice is answer (c). Give yourself two points if you picked it.

Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, especially after handling poultry or raw meat.

10. Give yourself two points if you picked (b) or (c). Food safety experts recommend thawing all foods in the refrigerator or the microwave oven but it is most important with cooked ready-to-eat foods. Gradual defrosting overnight is best because it helps maintain the quality of raw foods.

When defrosting in the microwave, follow package directions. Leave about 5 centimetres between the food and the inside surface of the microwave to allow microwaves to circulate. Smaller items will defrost more evenly than larger pieces of food. Cook the food a short time after defrosting in the microwave.

Marinate food in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Discard or cook (bring to the boil and simmer a few minutes) the marinade after use because it contains raw juices, which may harbour bacteria. If you want to use the marinade as a dip or sauce, reserve a portion before adding any raw food.

## Rating Your Home's Food Practices

**18-22 points** : Feel confident about the safety of foods served in your home.

**12 to 18 points** : Re-examine food safety practices in your home. Some key rules are being violated.

**11 points or below** : Take steps immediately to correct food handling, storage and cooking techniques used in your home. Current practices are putting you and other members of your household in danger of food-borne illness.

### *Need more information?*

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