



FOOD SAFETY INFORMATION COUNCIL

FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

22 December 2009

Parties, family dinners, and other gatherings where food is served are all part of the holiday cheer. But the merriment can change to misery if food makes you or others ill.

Typical symptoms of foodborne illness are stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea, which often start a few days after consuming contaminated food or drink. The symptoms usually are not long-lasting in healthy people—a few hours or a few days—and go away without treatment. But foodborne illness can be severe and even life-threatening to those most at risk:

- older adults
- infants and young children
- pregnant women
- people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or any condition that weakens their immune systems

Practicing four basic food safety measures can help prevent foodborne illness: *Clean, separate, cook, chill.*

CLEAN

The first rule of safe food preparation in the home is to keep everything clean.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food. For children, this means the time it takes to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice.
- Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) after preparing each food item and before going on to the next item.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking. Washing these foods makes it more likely for bacteria to spread to areas around the sink and countertops.

SEPARATE

Don't give bacteria the opportunity to spread from one food to another (cross-contaminate).

- Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked while shopping in the store, and while preparing and storing at home.
- Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked (raw meat, poultry, and seafood) and another one only for ready-to-eat foods (such as raw fruits and vegetables).
- Do not put cooked meat on an unwashed plate that has held raw meat.

COOK

Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

- Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness.
- Make sure the juices of chicken, turkey and minced meat products run clear.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry, and fish are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.
- Cook leftover marinades well if using them as a sauce.

CHILL

Refrigerate foods quickly because harmful bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature.

- Refrigerate leftovers and takeout foods within two hours.
- Set your refrigerator at 5°C or below.
- Don't defrost food at room temperature. Food can be defrosted safely in the refrigerator, or in the microwave. Food thawed in the microwave should be cooked immediately.
- Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw food. For example, a turkey needs two to three days to thaw completely when thawed in the refrigerator. If a turkey is not properly thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria.

BOTTOM LINE: WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT.

CONTACT: Juliana Madden, Food Safety Information Council Executive Officer: 0407 626 688

FURTHER INFORMATION: www.foodsafety.asn.au