

Food Safety

What is foodborne illness? Often referred to as “food poisoning,” it’s a sickness that occurs when people eat or drink harmful microorganisms (bacteria, parasites, viruses) or chemical contaminants found in some foods or drinking water. Some common symptoms are: nausea, vomiting, fever, headache, body aches, or diarrhea. Many symptoms of foodborne illness very closely resemble those of the flu; therefore sometimes it is difficult to determine the cause. The onset of symptoms can vary greatly from twenty minutes after ingestion to as long as six weeks later; but usually occur within one-to-three days. There are four main parts to practicing good food safety: clean, separate, cook, and chill.

Clean

Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds while scrubbing hands, wrists, fingernails, as well as in-between fingers. Rinse and dry hands with a clean paper towel before and after handling food. It is also important to keep soap and paper towels at each sink as a precaution. If soap and paper towels are not available, you can substitute alcohol-based wipes or gel formula to sanitize your hands.

Keep in mind surface safety. Make sure to wash any utensils you use before and after cooking such as cutting boards, dishes, countertops, etc. It is recommended to use paper towels to throw away instead of cloths to avoid excess germs. Be careful not to dry hands with a previously used towel used to clean up raw meat, poultry, or seafood juices. These raw juices may contain harmful bacteria.

Separate

Separate your raw meat, poultry and seafood from ready-to-eat foods first. Consider placing these items in plastic bags when grocery shopping to prevent the juices from leaking. Once at home, place these foods in sealed containers to avoid contamination. When ready to cook, thoroughly wash cutting boards, dishes and utensils with soap and hot water before, after, and during the process if they come into contact with raw items or unwashed produce. If possible, use two different cutting boards – one for raw meat and one for fruits and vegetables. If two cutting boards are not available, prepare fruits and vegetables first, and put them safely out of the way. Place cooked foods on clean, washed plates to avoid contamination with raw food or juices.

Cook

It is important to keep foods out of the “danger zone” (40-140°F), where bacteria are most likely to grow. In order to avoid this, foods must be cooked to the right internal temperature. Depending on the type of meat being prepared, there are different internal temperature requirements. For example, chicken needs to be heated to a higher temperature than veal. It is recommended to use a thermometer to check the internal temperature. Furthermore, do not leave food out for more than 2 hours at room temperature to avoid the “danger zone.”

Meat and Poultry

- Cook ground beef, veal, lamb, and pork to at least 160° F.
- Cook pork roasts, pork chops, beef, veal, and lamb roasts and steaks to at least 145° F.
- Cook ground poultry and chicken breast to 165° F.
- Cook whole poultry to 165° F - insert the thermometer into the thigh for accurate temperature.
- Be mindful of deli meat, especially for pregnant women. It poses a higher listeria risk. Reheat the meat until it is steaming before consuming.

Eggs

- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm.
- Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked unless pasteurized eggs in the shell are used.

Seafood

Finfish should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145° F (63° C). But if a thermometer is not available or appropriate, follow these guidelines to determine when it is done:

- Cook fish until it appears opaque (milky white) and flakes with a fork.
- Cook shrimp, lobster, and scallops until they reach an opaque (milky white) color. Scallops should be opaque (milky white) and firm.
- Cook clams, mussels, and oysters until their shells open. This means that they are done. Throw away the ones that did not open.

Leftovers

Be sure to reheat leftovers to 165° F (74° C). Leftover sauces, soups, and gravies should be brought to a boil before consuming. Remember to not leave food out for more than two hours before placing it in the refrigerator. If it is a hot day (90° F or higher), reduce time to one hour.

Chill

Your refrigerator should be kept at or below 40°F while your freezer should be kept at 0°F. If you are unsure of these temperatures, place a thermometer in your appliances and check the temperature periodically. Refrigerate or freeze perishables and make sure to use ready-to-eat perishables first. Make sure to marinate foods in the refrigerator, not at room temperature.

Resources

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: www.fda.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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