

# Food Safety

## *Protecting Yourself and Your Family*

Being aware can help you guard against the dangers of unsafe foods.

### Key points to remember:

- Some foods that we eat to stay healthy can actually make us sick if not prepared, handled, or stored in the right way.
- Taking some easy precautions and using common sense can help keep food safe.

We may not like to think about it, but some of the foods we eat to stay healthy can actually make us sick. For example, food that hasn't been prepared in the right way may contain bacteria like *E. coli*. Unsafe food can also spread food-borne illnesses like salmonellosis and other infections.

Fortunately, there are a number of easy steps that can make a big difference in protecting yourself against potentially unsafe foods. A little common sense can go a long way too!



Food safety means knowing how to shop safely, to prepare and store foods in the right way, and generally to avoid spreading harmful bacteria.

**In the Supermarket.** Avoid cans, bottles, or other packages that look like they've been damaged or opened. Don't buy meat or fish that has a strong or strange odor, and avoid any items past their expiration date. Pick up refrigerated items like milk and meats as your last stop in the store. Put meats in a plastic bag so the juices don't leak on other items in your cart. Check eggs before you buy them, and avoid any fruits with broken skins.

**Preparing Food.** Put cold-storage items away as soon as you get home from the supermarket. Cook or freeze raw meat, fish or poultry within 2 days. Scrub all fruits and vegetables thoroughly to remove dirt, pesticides, and bacteria. Wash your hands frequently with warm, soapy water – especially before and after handling raw meats. Use separate cutting boards for meat and fruits/vegetables.

**Clean-Up.** Even if they look clean, countertops can harbor millions of harmful bacteria. Clean your countertops regularly with some kind of bacteria-killing cleaning solution. And don't forget to clean your cutting boards as well. Also, make sure to wash your dish towels in hot water frequently.

**Food Storage.** Make sure that your refrigerator and freezer are set to the right temperature for food storage. Put leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible. Use containers that have lids that seal tightly, and eat whatever leftovers you have within 3-5 days. Eat frozen leftovers within 2 months. Don't freeze items that contain mayonnaise.

**Understanding the Microwave.** The microwave is a convenient and powerful tool, but keep these points in mind:

- Only use dishes/containers in the microwave that are microwave-approved.
- Don't reuse trays that come with microwaveable prepared foods.
- If you defrost foods in the microwave, finish cooking them right away.
- Don't use anything metal (including foil)!

Source: [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov).

**Health Disclaimer!** The information in this newsletter is not a substitute for medical advice. It is only for reference and should not be used to determine treatment for your specific medical condition. Only a health care provider can do this. Seek prompt medical care for any specific health issues and consult your physician about the use of prescription or over-the-counter products to treat any medical condition, or before starting any treatment regimen.

