

Stay Safe At The Plate

September is National Food Safety Education Month. Launched in 1994, the month is devoted to increasing awareness about proper food safety practices. This is important as one in every six Americans gets sick by consuming contaminated foods or beverages, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And consumers ranked foodborne illness or “food poisoning” from bacteria as the #1 food safety issue in the 2017 International Food Information Council Foundation’s Food & Health Survey.

While many people don’t consider the home to be a risky place for food poisoning, it is actually the most likely place for foodborne illness to occur. In her article in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Dr. Carol Byrd-Bredbenner, a Rutgers University nutrition professor, explains that most of the food we eat is prepared at home and home kitchens are often sites for pets, old newspapers, dirty laundry, houseplants, brooms and mops, all filled with bacteria. This can increase the spread of bacteria to foods that lead to illness

The good news is you can protect your family from foodborne illness by taking a few smart steps in your kitchen, says Amy Goodson, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Texas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics spokesperson. She suggests using the four core practices in the Partnership for Food Safety Education’s Fight Bac!® program: clean, separate, cook and chill.

CLEAN

Keep bacteria from spreading throughout your kitchen:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the restroom, playing with pets or changing diapers.
- Wash cutting boards, utensils and counters with hot soapy water

between preparing different food items



- Rinse all fruits and vegetables with running water, even those with skins or rinds that won’t be eaten

SEPARATE

Avoid “cross-contamination” or spreading bacteria from one food to another:

- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery cart, shopping bags and refrigerator.
- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a different one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

COOK

Make sure to cook food to the proper temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of cooked meat, poultry and egg dishes as listed in this chart.

CHILL

Slow the growth of harmful bacteria by refrigerating foods quickly.

- Promptly refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs and other perishable foods after grocery shopping.
- Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room

SAFE MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURES	
as measured with a food thermometer	
Beef, pork, veal and lamb (roast, steaks and chops)	145° F with a three-minute “rest time” after removal from the heat source
Ground meats	160° F
Poultry (whole, parts or ground)	165° F
Eggs and egg dishes	160° F, but cook eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm; scrambled eggs should not be runny
Leftovers	165° F
Finfish	145° F

temperature more than two hours before refrigerating or freezing.

- Do NOT defrost food at room temperature. Defrost food in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave. Cook food thawed in cold water or the microwave immediately.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.

We all want to stay well and avoid getting sick. So now you’re armed with the four tactics to keep your food and your family safe at the plate!



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