

Keeping Foods Safe

Many times when you think you have a touch of flu or indigestion, you might actually have mild food poisoning. Vomiting, diarrhea and fever could be caused by more severe food poisoning. Call your doctor.

Your immune system may not be as strong as it used to be. This means that food you used to be able to eat safely can now easily make you ill.

Foods that are improperly prepared, cooked or stored can make you sick. It is the germs (and toxins from the germs) in these foods that upset your stomach or make you very ill.

Having safe food to eat means avoiding the spread and growth of germs on your food. It means properly cooking meats and eggs. It means knowing how long you can store foods. And lastly, it means throwing out any foods that might be spoiled.



Safe Food Rules:

- Wash your hands
- Keep your kitchen clean
- Thaw frozen food properly
- Cook meat properly
- Keep hot food piping hot
- Cool hot food quickly
- Keep cold food refrigerator cold
- Use up leftovers quickly
- Do not eat raw eggs and unpasteurized milk or cheese
- Throw out risky foods
- Safely store foods

Wash your hands

- Wash your hands with soap and water
 - before preparing or eating foods
 - after touching raw meat, fish, poultry or raw eggs
 - after using the toilet
 - after touching garbage.
- Do not cough or sneeze on or near food. If you cough, sneeze or touch your mouth or nose while preparing food, wash your hands with soap and water before going back to the food.
- Home Care workers who have a cut or a sore on their hands must use disposable gloves when preparing foods.
- Mix food with a clean spoon or fork, not your hands.
- If you are tasting a food during cooking, use a clean spoon each time you taste.

Keep your kitchen clean

- Clean all dishes and utensils (including the can opener), table tops, cutting boards and sink with hot soapy water after each use. To sanitize dishes you can add one capful of bleach to a sink full of soapy water. Rinse dishes with hot water before air drying.
- Any item that has touched raw meat, fish, poultry or raw eggs will be covered in germs. Wash these items with hot soapy water and rinse with a mild bleach solution. **Never place cooked, ready-to-eat food on the unwashed dish or board.**
- **Mild bleach solution:** 1 portion of bleach to 9 portions of water. For example 1/4 cup of bleach to 2 1/4 cups of water. Place this in a spray bottle or jar, label as BLEACH SOLUTION, and keep it handy.
- A dirty wash cloth is a perfect home for germs. Soak wash cloths daily in the bleach solution. Change your wash cloth every day or two. Also, change your dish towels and hand towels regularly.
- Keep your refrigerator clean.
- Remove garbage regularly. Replace with a clean bag.
- Keep home free of flies, insects and rodents.

Thaw frozen food properly

- Thaw foods in the refrigerator.
- Make sure raw meat juices do not drip onto other foods.
- If you are in a rush, thaw foods by placing under cold running water. Foods can also be thawed by soaking them in cold water. Change the water every hour.
- You can thaw foods in a microwave oven if you are going to cook the food right away.
- If you have thawed some frozen raw meat and then decide you don't need it, **cook it**, then refreeze it.

Cook meats properly

- Ground meat, rolled roasts, chicken and turkey must be cooked until there is **no pink showing**.
- Pork, roasts and steaks can be eaten slightly pink as long as they are well-cooked on the outside.
- Fish should be cooked until it is flaky and dry.
- Stuffing
 - The safest way to cook stuffing is to not place it in the turkey, but rather to cook it separately (in tin foil or a casserole).
 - If it is cooked in the poultry it should be placed loosely in the bird just prior to cooking, removed soon after cooking, and refrigerated in a separate container.
 - Never place stuffing in the bird the night before cooking, even if it is refrigerated.
- Cook poultry at a temperature of 150°C (300°F) or more. Always complete cooking on the same day.
- **Using a meat thermometer is a good way to tell if meats are cooked.**
 - turkey:** 85°C (185°F) in the thigh
 - stuffing:** 75°C (165°F)
 - beef:** 60-75°C (140°-170°F)
 - pork:** 80-85°C (175°-185°F)
- Boil sauces or marinades that had raw meat in them for 5-10 minutes prior to eating. Never re-use uncooked marinades.

Keep hot food piping hot

- Serve hot food as soon as it has been cooked. If you are going to let it sit on the stove it has to be kept simmering. It is dangerous for warm food to be sitting.

Cool hot food quickly

- Refrigerate cooked food as soon as it has slightly cooled.
- To speed up the cooling of large amounts of food, divide it into several containers, cool them in an ice bath, then refrigerate. Its okay if the food is still warm when you place it in the fridge.
- Place the food on a fridge rack and make sure there is room on all sides of the food so that air can move around it and cool it down quickly. Once cold in the fridge you can put it in the freezer, if you wish.

Keep cold food refrigerator cold

- Refrigerate bought raw or cooked meats and dairy products immediately. If the food says “Keep Refrigerated” then do so. Freeze bought frozen foods immediately, or freeze foods you do not plan to eat right away.
- Some foods can be stored in your cupboard but once opened must be refrigerated.
- Do not leave milk sitting on your counter. Pour your glass of milk and return the rest to the fridge.
- **Refrigerate right away:** cream, custard, or meringue pies and foods with custard fillings, including cakes or cream puffs, salad and sandwiches made with creamy salad dressings, any food made with eggs, milk or mayonnaise, and broth or gravy.

Use leftovers quickly

How long can leftovers be kept?

- It is best to use the leftovers from the fridge the next day if possible.
 - Leftover gravy and meat broth should be used within 2 days.
 - Leftover mayonnaise-based salads should be used within 3 days.
 - All other leftovers in the fridge should be used within 4 days.
 - **If a food that needs refrigeration was forgotten and left out on the counter for more than 2 hours it should be thrown away.**
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- Heat leftovers until steaming and keep at this temperature for several minutes. Leftover broth and gravies should be boiled for 5-10 minutes before eating.
 - Freeze leftovers if you have more than you can eat the next day. Re-use these within three months.
 - Here are ideas so that leftovers do not get forgotten at the back of your fridge:
 - Only refrigerate enough for the next day. Freeze the rest.
 - Label what is in the container, and date.
 - Place leftovers at the front of the fridge.
 - Keep the fridge clean and tidy.

Do not eat raw eggs

- Do not serve raw, uncooked eggs in foods or drinks.
- Eggs should be cooked until the egg white is no longer clear.

One hundred germs can turn into one million in just 3 1/2 hours at room temperature.

Milk or cheese must be pasteurized.

Throw out all risky food

This is risky food:

- It smells “off”.
- It doesn’t look good.
- It looks and smells fine but you don’t know how long its been in the fridge or sitting on the counter. Foods in the freezer or foods in your cupboard may also be risky if you suspect they’ve been there for more than a year.

If you're in doubt, then throw it out.

- It is a canned food that you have not opened and that is bulging or leaking. Or when you open the can, it spurts out, appears bubbly or has a bad smell. Never taste one of these canned food as it could be very dangerous. Beware of home canned foods.
- It is an egg with a cracked shell, and you don't know when it was cracked.
- It is a mouldy liquid or semi-solid food such as jam or syrup. Simply scraping off the mould is not good enough. Some moulds make toxins that may have seeped into the food.
- It is mouldy nuts and mouldy grains and flours. These can be very dangerous. Note: fresh nuts, grains and flours can be stored in the freezer if you are not going to be eat them within a short period of time.
- It is mould covering a whole piece of hard cheese. If the mould is just on a small part of the cheese, trim it off down to a depth of half an inch beyond the mould. Wrap in a fresh container.

Safely store foods

Use foods up before the expiration date on the package.

Label and date all leftovers and all foods placed in the freezer.

In your cupboard

- Many dried and canned foods can be stored safely for a year or more in airtight containers, although loss of nutrition and flavour usually occurs sooner.
- If your home is very hot and humid and if the foods are poorly sealed then they can go bad a lot sooner. Always look at and smell the food before eating. Check for moulds and for signs of insects or mites.
- Rotate canned and dried goods so that the oldest ones are used up first.
- Peanut butter once opened should be stored for no longer than 2 months in the cupboard. Extra peanut butter should be packaged and stored in the freezer.

In the freezer

- It is best not to store foods in your freezer for too long as they can lose a lot of nutrition and flavour in 1-6 months.
- Raw meats can be frozen safely for longer (6-12 months) but cooked meats should be used up within 3 months.

In the refrigerator

- See “Use leftovers quickly”.
- raw ground meat, chopped stewing meats and organ meats — use within 2 days
- other raw meat — within 5 days
- raw poultry or fish — within 2 days
- opened package of hot dogs or bacon — within 1 week (2 weeks if unopened)
- opened package of lunch meats — within 1 week
- whole ham — within 1 week
- hard boiled egg — within 1 week
- Opened butter and margarine should be eaten within the month. Extra amounts can be frozen.

Other guidelines for food safety

- Do not hold foods for 2-3 hours in an automatic oven prior to cooking.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables.
- Clean the tops of ketchup bottles after using.
- Keep pesticides and chemicals out of the kitchen (or out of the home) where they might get mixed up with foods.
- The correct temperature of a refrigerator is 2-4°C (36°-39°F), and of a freezer is -18°C (0°F). If your fridge or freezer is not defrosted, it may not maintain the right temperature.
- When dining out, make sure that the foods you are served are well cooked and hot. If your hamburger is pink inside — do not eat it. Ask for it to be cooked properly.