



Fact Sheet

Food Safety Facts for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

Buying poor quality products and using improper storage, handling and preparation techniques for fresh produce can result in foodborne illness. To reduce the risk of illness, follow these food safety tips.

Buying Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- ▶ Purchase fresh fruits and vegetables that are not bruised or damaged. If buying fresh-cut ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables, be sure they are properly refrigerated (i.e., less than 5°C) or surrounded by ice.
- ▶ Fresh fruits and vegetables can become contaminated with harmful bacteria when they come into contact with unprocessed food items such as meats and their juices. Be sure to separate fresh fruits and vegetables from unprocessed or raw food items in order to avoid cross-contamination.
- ▶ Some people might be allergic to certain fresh fruits and vegetables, in particular people with pollen allergies. For more information on food allergies and fresh produce, please consult: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/tipcon/orale.shtml>
- ▶ Consumers should note that certain fresh fruits and vegetables may contain levels of naturally occurring toxic chemicals. These chemicals may have an adverse effect on human health, for example: toxic wild mushrooms, cyanogenic glucosides in cassava, hypoglycin and propionic acid in immature ackee.

Washing and Preparation

- ▶ Discard any rotten fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables, always wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with hot water and soap.
- ▶ Before eating, preparing or cutting fresh fruits and vegetables:
 - ▶ thoroughly wash them under potable running water, unless otherwise specified - do not use soap or detergents;
 - ▶ scrub fresh fruits and vegetables that have firm surfaces, such as oranges, potatoes and carrots with a clean produce brush. The flesh of improperly washed fresh fruits and vegetables can become contaminated during cutting;
 - ▶ cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables since harmful bacteria can thrive in these areas. Clean your knife after cutting these damaged or bruised areas to prevent contaminating the rest of the fruit.
- ▶ Thoroughly wash all food equipment such as counter tops, cutting boards and utensils that come into contact with fresh produce with hot water and soap. Rinse them and sanitize them with a mild bleach solution (5ml/1tsp. bleach per 750ml/3 cups water) and air-dry.

- ▶ Avoid using sponges and other cleaning materials which are difficult to keep clean and dry. Otherwise you could be spreading bacteria around.
- ▶ Once cut, immediately place peeled or cut fruits and vegetables on/into a separate clean plate/container to prevent them from becoming cross-contaminated.

Storing Freshly Cut Fruits and Vegetables

- ▶ Refrigerate (i.e., less than 5°C) fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours of peeling or cutting. Leftover cut fruits and vegetables should be discarded if left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- ▶ Prevent fruits and vegetables that have been peeled or cut from coming into direct contact with raw meat, poultry or fish.

Proper Storage Techniques for Fresh Produce

- ▶ After returning from purchasing your fresh fruits and vegetables, promptly refrigerate those that need refrigeration. The following are the different requirements for keeping fresh fruits and vegetables at their optimum freshness and sensory quality.
 - ▶ *Only in the Refrigerator, Never at Room Temperature to Avoid Spoilage:* apples, artichokes, asparagus, beans, beets, blueberries, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, Belgian endive, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cherries, sweet corn, cranberries, cucumbers, eggplant, ginger root, grapes, fresh herbs, leeks, lettuce and other greens, mushrooms, green onions, parsnips, peas, peppers, pineapple, new potatoes, radishes, raspberries, rhubarb, strawberries, squash, citrus fruit, turnips.
 - ▶ *At Room Temperature until Ripe and then in the Refrigerator:* apricots, avocados, kiwifruit, mangoes, melons, nectarines, papaya, peaches, pears, plums, tomatoes.
 - ▶ *Only at Room Temperature and Preferably not in the Refrigerator:* bananas, garlic, globe onions, mature potatoes, pumpkins, rutabagas, sweet potatoes.

Safeguarding Canada's Food Supply

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the Government of Canada's science-based regulator for animal health, plant protection and, in partnership with Health Canada, food safety.

For more information on food safety or to order free copies of this brochure, visit the CFIA website at www.inspection.gc.ca or call 1 800 442-2342/TTY 1 800 465-7735 (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday to Friday). You can also find food safety information on the Health Canada and Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education websites respectively at www.hc-sc.gc.ca and www.canfightbac.org