



Canadian Food  
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'inspection des aliments

# Food Safety Tips for using **Food Thermometers**



*Food* SAFETY

Canada

## What is foodborne illness?

Foodborne illness is the term used when people get sick from eating contaminated food. Food can be contaminated by viruses, bacteria and parasites. People often call foodborne illness 'food poisoning'.

People may think that they have the flu when they have 'food poisoning' because the symptoms can be almost the same. Some symptoms of foodborne illness are stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fever.

# Using a food thermometer can help prevent foodborne illness



Proper cooking of food is important to prevent foodborne illness. Follow these food safety tips for food thermometers to help keep your food safe.

## Why should I use a food thermometer?

You need to cook food to temperatures that are high enough to destroy bacteria, viruses and parasites. A food thermometer lets you check the internal temperature of a food to find out if it is cooked properly. Using a food thermometer can help you prevent foodborne illness.

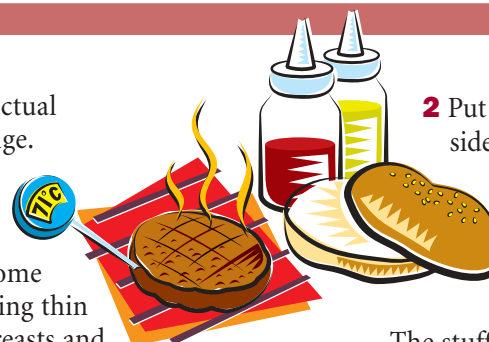
## Can I tell if meat is cooked by cutting it open and looking at it?

No, this is not a good way to tell if food is cooked properly. The colour of the meat or meat juices won't tell you if the meat has reached a safe temperature. A hamburger might be brown in the centre before it gets to 71°C (160° F) – the safe internal temperature for ground beef. Only a food thermometer can tell you what the internal temperature is.

## What kind of food thermometer should I use?

You can buy many different kinds of food thermometers. Most thermometers give an accurate temperature reading if you use them properly. A digital instant-read thermometer is very easy to use and to read. It measures thin and thick food and you can find it in most stores. Check a hardware, kitchen or grocery store for thermometers.

Buy a thermometer that gives an actual temperature reading not just a range. Some thermometers stay in the food while it cooks. Other thermometers go into food when you think it is almost done cooking. Some thermometers are better for checking thin foods, like hamburgers, chicken breasts and pork chops. Other thermometers are only good for roasts. Look around and choose the type of thermometer that's best for the kind of cooking you do. And remember to use it!



## How do I use a food thermometer?

Read the manufacturer's instructions for proper directions. Follow those directions exactly. For most thermometers, you put the thermometer in the thickest part of the food, away from fat, bone or gristle.

*For beef burgers, chicken pieces, pork chops, meatloaves, roasts, casseroles and egg dishes:*

**1** When you think the food is almost cooked, take the food away from the heat.

**2** Put an instant-read thermometer sideways into the centre of the patty or into the thickest part of the food.

*For poultry (whole chicken or turkey):*

Do not stuff the bird. Cook the stuffing in a separate dish.

The stuffing must be at a safe internal temperature as well as the meat.

Follow steps 1 and 2 as directed above.

- The food is ready to eat when it has reached the proper temperature. Cook the food longer if it has not reached the proper temperature.
- Wash the thermometer and any other utensils you used with soap and hot water after checking the temperature. If the food is not cooked enough, make sure you use a clean thermometer when you check the temperature again. Always clean the thermometer before you put it away.

Food	Temperature
ham, ready-to-eat, fully cooked	You can eat it cold or you can heat it.
beef, lamb and veal steaks and roasts	71°C (160°F) medium 77°C (170°F) well done
ground beef, pork, veal and lamb; pork chops, ribs and roasts; egg dishes	71°C (160°F)
stuffing and casseroles, hot dogs, leftovers	74°C (165°F)
chicken and turkey breasts	85°C (185°F)
turkey and chicken (whole bird), chicken and turkey legs, thighs and wings	85°C (185°F)
ground chicken and turkey	85°C (185°F)

# Safeguarding Canada's Food Supply

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the Government of Canada's regulator for food safety, animal health and plant protection.

Food safety and consumer protection are essential to the health of Canadians. At the CFIA, the safety of Canada's food supply is central to everything we do.

**For more information on food safety,  
visit the Canadian Food Inspection  
Agency website at**

**[www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)**

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