



Food Thermometer

food safety tips



Preventing foodborne illness

What is foodborne illness?

Food contaminated by bacteria, viruses and parasites can make you sick. Many people have had foodborne illness and not even known it. It's sometimes called food poisoning, and can feel like the flu. Symptoms may include the following:

- stomach cramps
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- fever

Symptoms can start soon after eating contaminated food, but they can hit up to a month or more later. For some people, especially young children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems, foodborne illness can be very dangerous.

Public health experts estimate that there are 11 to 13 million cases of foodborne illness in Canada every year. Most cases of foodborne illness can be prevented by using safe food handling practices and using a food thermometer to check that your food is cooked to a safe internal temperature!

Why should I use a food thermometer?

The answer is simple: for your safety. By cooking your food to a safe internal temperature, you can destroy harmful bacteria. Most of us have years of experience in the kitchen, but some of the old methods and myths are not reliable.

Using a food thermometer lets you check the inside temperature of the food to find out if it is cooked to a high enough temperature to be safe to eat. Help prevent foodborne illness by always using a food thermometer.

Myth-Buster #1:

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

No you can't. The only way to be sure that food is cooked to a safe internal temperature is to use a food thermometer to check.

Research has shown that the inside colour of a hamburger and its running juices are **not** reliable indicators of how well the burger is cooked. Sometimes previously frozen ground beef turns brown before it reaches a temperature high enough to kill harmful *E. coli* bacteria.

FOODSAFE TIP: Check the internal temperature of your hamburger patty and all food made with ground beef. If it is 71°C (160°F), it's safe to eat. Remember . . . your burger's done at 71!

Myth-Buster #2:

Do I have to overcook all my food to make it safe to eat?

Absolutely not! Using food thermometers can make you a better and safer cook! Cooking your food to a safe internal temperature will kill harmful bacteria. Using a food thermometer helps you cook to just the right temperature and prevents overcooking.

FOODSAFE TIP: Cooking a chicken? A turkey? For maximum safety, food safety experts recommend cooking the stuffing in a separate dish. Why? It takes longer for the stuffing and the meat to reach a safe internal temperature, so why not un-stuff and save time? Stuffing and meat must each reach separate safe internal temperatures. See table.



WHEN IS MY FOOD READY TO EAT?

Food	Temperature
fully cooked and ready-to-eat meats (e.g. ham, roast)	You can eat it cold or you can heat it.
beef and veal steaks and roasts	63°C (145°F) medium-rare 71°C (160°F) medium, 77°C (170°F) well done
pork chops, ribs, roasts; ground beef, ground pork and ground veal, including sausages made with ground beef/pork/veal	71°C (160°F)
stuffing and casseroles, hot dogs, leftovers, egg dishes; ground chicken and ground turkey, including sausages made with ground chicken/turkey	74°C (165°F)
chicken and turkey breasts, legs, thighs and wings	74°C (165°F)
chicken and turkey, whole bird	85°C (185°F)



Myth-Buster #3:

Do I have to check the internal temperature of every ground beef patty?

Yes – but it’s easy. Buy an instant-read digital food thermometer. When you think the food is almost done, take it away from the heat and take the temperature by inserting a food thermometer into the thickest part of the food, away from fat, bone or gristle. If the burgers aren’t done, cook them longer and check the temperature again.



FOODSAFE TIP: Wash the thermometer’s stem and any other utensils you have used with soap and hot water after every use. Why? Because any bacteria in raw or undercooked meat juices can contaminate other food.

The safe cook’s guide to food thermometers

Food safety experts recommend using a food thermometer that gives an actual temperature reading, not just a range. Oven-safe thermometers stay in the food while it cooks. The instant-read type is used when you think the food is done.

Read the manufacturer’s instructions carefully! For most thermometers, simply insert it into the thickest part of the food, away from fat, bone or gristle. Food is ready to eat when it has reached the proper internal temperature. See table.

Digital instant-read thermometers read quickly. The thermometer works well in both thin and thick food – just insert it near the end of cooking time.

Digital instant-read thermometer-fork combinations can also be read quickly. The fork sensor needs to be fully inserted into the thickest part of the food.

Dial oven-safe thermometers are for thicker foods, like roasts and casseroles, not for thin food. They can stay in the food while it’s cooking in the oven or barbecue.

Disposable temperature indicators are for one-time use with specific foods. Temperature-sensitive material changes colour when the proper temperature is reached.

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

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