

# Eating Safely

## Guidelines for buying, storing, and preparing food to help you and your family eat safely

Food poisoning can occur if a person eats or drinks something that contains harmful germs (mold and bacteria). In healthy people, the body is well equipped to fight off these harmful germs. However, some people have weak immune systems caused by illnesses or their treatments. These people have a much higher risk for food poisoning, and they need to be extra careful with the food they eat.



## Shopping for Food

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- Avoid tasting food samples provided in grocery stores.
- Learn about food product recalls at [www.fda.gov/safety/recalls/](http://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls/)

### Inspect Packages

- Do not use products that are past the “Expiration,” “Sell By,” or “Best Used By” date.
- Do not use items that have dents, holes, rust, bulges, or leaks.
- Look for the word “pasteurized” on the labels of milk, cheese, and other milk products, as well as pasteurized juices.
  - Pasteurized means the product has gone through a process that helps kill germs.

### Use a Safe Shopping Pattern

- First, collect canned items or dry packaged items.
- Next, pick up fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Last, select refrigerated and frozen items.
  - Place packages of raw meat in separate plastic bags before placing in the shopping cart to prevent germs on the wrapping from spreading to other items.
- After shopping, get cold and frozen items into the refrigerator or freezer right away.

## Preparing Food

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### Wash Hands Often and Clean Food Prep Surfaces

- Wash hands before, during, and after meal preparation and before serving food.
- Washing hands greatly reduces the risk of food-borne illnesses.
- Clean counters before you begin preparing food.
- Clean lids on all canned items before opening.



### Keep Raw Meats and Ready to Eat Foods Separate

- Use two cutting boards to prevent cross contamination.
  - Use one board for raw meats and seafood and one for ready to eat foods like vegetables.
  - Clean cutting board with soap and warm water after each use.

### Fruits and Vegetables

- Always wash fruits and vegetables:
  - Scrub firm or bumpy produce - such as melons and cucumbers - with a clean produce brush under running water. After washing, dry produce with a clean paper towel to further reduce bacteria that may be present on the surface.
  - Wash lettuce, spinach, and berries with cold running water. Avoid blackberries and raspberries; they do not wash well.
- Do not eat fruits that are bruised or have torn skin.

### Thawing Food

- Thaw foods in the refrigerator, microwave oven, or in a water tight plastic bag set in cold water.
  - If using cold water, change the water every 30 minutes.
  - If using microwave oven, cook right way after thawing.
- Never thaw foods on the kitchen counter because germs grow rapidly at room temperature.

### Cook to Proper Temperatures

- Harmful bacteria are killed when food is cooked to proper temperatures.
- Buy a food thermometer and use it to check if food is at a safe temperature.
  - Hot items should be 165°F or hotter; Cold items should be 40°F or colder.



## Storing Food

- Throw away food that has mold on it. Cutting off the mold will not remove the harmful germs.
- Store raw meats in a separate bin or shelf below cooked foods.

### Refrigerate Promptly

- After you finish eating, put cooked food in the refrigerator (at 40°F) or freezer (at 0°F) as soon as possible.
- Food will cool more quickly if you use a covered, shallow container.
- Never leave any food out on the counter for longer than one (1) hour.

### How long are foods safe in the refrigerator?

- Eggs: 7 to 14 days
- Raw fish and seafood: 1 to 2 days
- Raw fruits and vegetables: 7 days
- Leftovers: 3 to 4 days
- Raw meats: 1 to 2 days
- Luncheon meat: 3 to 5 days
- Milk: 5 days

## Eating Out

- Ask how the food is prepared.
- Request thoroughly cooked foods.
  - If food is served undercooked, send it back.
- Avoid foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs.
- At fast food restaurants, special order your food to make sure it has not been sitting under a heating lamp.
- Avoid all food buffets and salad bars.
- Check health inspection rating for the restaurant.
- Request single-serving condiment packets.

### Leftovers

- Go straight home and put leftovers in refrigerator. (Only reheat once to 165°F and eat right away.)
- Avoid leftover rice and pasta.



## Do Not Eat or Drink

### Raw or Undercooked Eggs

- (or any product containing raw or undercooked eggs)
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm.

### Raw Dairy Products

(raw or unpasteurized milk or cheese and fresh soft cheeses)

- Brie
- Camembert
- Blue cheese (roquefort, gorgonzola, stilton, etc.)
- Feta
- Mexican-style queso fresco



### Raw or Undercooked Shellfish

- Sushi
- Clams
- Oysters
- Mussels
- Scallops
- Steamed seafood such as mussels and snails



### Well Water

- Memphis tap water is allowed as well as bottled water that reads “reverse osmosis”.

### Raw or Rare Meat or Undercooked Poultry

- All meat should be cooked well-done.

### Ready to Eat Foods

- Uncooked hot dogs
- Fresh-sliced meats from deli counter
- Other deli-style foods
- Raw local honey and unpasteurized maple syrup
- Sprouts (such as bean sprouts and alfalfa sprouts)
- Raw unroasted nuts
- Dried fruits



### Tea

### Black Pepper

- Only use black pepper packets found at St. Jude—they have been sterilized.

### Avoid in Kay Kafe

- Sushi bar
- Roast beef from deli bar
- Lettuce and vegetables on the salad bar that have started to brown