

Safety Topic of the Month

Food Safety Tips for Healthy Holidays

All info taken from fda.gov

Parties, family dinners, and other gatherings where food is served are all part of the holiday. But the merriment can change to misery if food makes you or others ill.

Typical symptoms of foodborne illness are vomiting, diarrhea, and flu-like symptoms, which can start anywhere from hours to days after contaminated food or drinks are consumed. The symptoms usually are not long-lasting in healthy people—a few hours or a few days—and usually go away without medical treatment. Foodborne illness can be severe and even life-threatening to anyone, especially those most at risk:

- older adults
- infants and young children
- pregnant women
- people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or any condition that weakens their immune system
- people who take medicines that suppress the immune system; for example, some medicines for rheumatoid arthritis

Combating bacteria, viruses, parasites, and other contaminants in our food supply is a high priority for the Food and Drug Administration. But consumers have a role to play, too, especially when it comes to safe food-handling practices in the home.

1. Clean:

The first rule of safe food preparation in the home is to keep everything clean.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling any food.
- Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next item.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking. Washing these foods makes it more likely for bacteria to spread to areas around the sink and countertops.

2. Separate:

Don't give bacteria the opportunity to spread from one food to another (cross-contamination).

- Keep raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked. Take this precaution while shopping in the store, when storing in the refrigerator at home, and while preparing meals.
- Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked (such as raw meat, poultry, and seafood) and another one for those that will not (such as raw fruits and vegetables).
- Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood—and from kitchen utensils used for those products.
- Do not put cooked meat or other food that is ready to eat on an unwashed plate that has held any raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, or their juices.

3. Cook:

Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry, and fish are cooked to a safe internal temperature. To check a turkey for safety, insert a food thermometer into the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. The turkey is safe when the temperature reaches 165°F. If the turkey is stuffed, the temperature of the stuffing should be 165°F.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. When making your own eggnog or other recipe calling for raw eggs, use pasteurized shell eggs, liquid or frozen pasteurized egg products, or powdered egg whites.
- Don't eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.