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Questions about food safety?
Call the Food Safety Information Society 1-800-892-8333.



Food Safety at Home



Your guide to
safe food
handling

Home food safety – the information you're hungry for...



Mishandling food
in the home can
result in foodborne
illness.

Food poisoning, a type of foodborne illness, results from eating foods that contain enough harmful microorganisms or their toxins to cause illness. Although often mistaken as a viral illness, like the 24-hour flu, Health Canada estimates that there are 11 to 13 million cases of foodborne illness in Canada each year.

The Facts...

- For those at high risk – infants and young children, pregnant women, older adults and people with weakened immune systems – foodborne illness can result in very serious health problems, such as kidney failure.
- All foods, including fruits and vegetables, have the potential to cause illness since microorganisms can exist on all surfaces.
- Two out of three households in North America put themselves at risk for foodborne illness by not practising basic food safety steps at home.

You're in control...

There are **4 EASY steps** you can take at home to eliminate harmful bacteria and greatly reduce the risk of foodborne illness for your family. **You can *Fight BAC!***[™]

1. **Clean** – wash hands and surfaces often
2. **Chill** – refrigerate or freeze foods promptly
3. **Separate** – keep raw meat/poultry/seafood and their juices separate from one another and other foods
4. **Cook** – cook to proper temperatures

Studies estimate that about eighty-five percent of all cases of foodborne illness could be prevented if food is handled properly.

There are four
simple safe
food-handling
steps you can
take at home.



Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often.

Proper hand washing may eliminate nearly half of all cases of foodborne illness.

Thoroughly wash hands using warm, soapy water.



- **Wash your hands** before you begin cooking and after you touch pets, change a diaper, cough or sneeze, use the phone, sort dirty laundry, use the restroom, take out the garbage or handle dirty dishes.
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds – that's two choruses of "Happy Birthday". Keep a nail scrub brush handy to get under your fingernails. Use a clean cloth or paper towels to dry.
- **Always wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and surfaces when switching tasks, such as handling raw meat/poultry/seafood and preparing vegetables.**
- Mix 1 tsp (5 mL) bleach with 3 cups (750 mL) water to sanitize drains, cutting boards, taps, sinks, counter tops, sponges, pot scrubbers and fridge door handles. Store your bleach solution in a labelled spray bottle.

- Wash sponges with hot soapy water after every use. Change sponges, dishcloths, aprons and towels **often** – machine wash in hot water. Replace sponges every few weeks.
- **Wash all fruits and vegetables, including those that you peel or cut, like melons, oranges or cucumbers.**
- Washing eggs is **not recommended** as this will remove their natural protective coating.
- Washing raw meat/poultry/seafood before cooking is **not recommended** as this can spread bacteria to kitchen surfaces and other foods.



Frequently sanitize your kitchen using a chlorine bleach solution.

Chill: Refrigerate/freeze foods promptly.

Cold temperatures can prevent most harmful bacteria from growing.

- **Use the 2 Hour Rule in your home and while shopping – refrigerate or freeze all perishables within 2 hours of purchase or preparation.** If the weather is hot, (greater than 80°F/26°C), reduce that time to 1 hour and use a cooler for perishables.

- Set your fridge temperature to be less than 40°F (4°C) and just slightly above the point where your lettuce will freeze. Check the temperature with a refrigerator thermometer. Avoid packing your fridge – cold air must be able to circulate.

- Store eggs in the main body of the fridge, not the door. This keeps eggs at a cooler, more consistent temperature. When buying and storing eggs, check the “best before” date on carton for assurance of Grade A quality.

- **Marinate foods in the fridge.** (If using a 30 minute quick-marinade product, follow package instructions).

- **Never defrost foods at room temperature.**

- Meat/poultry/seafood defrosted in the microwave should be cooked immediately.

- **Cook thawed meat/poultry/seafood before refreezing.** If ice crystals are still present, it can be refrozen.

- **Divide leftovers into small portions to get foods cold faster.** Refrigerate leftovers promptly and cover when cooled. Don't keep leftovers longer than 2 to 3 days.

- Remove cooked poultry from bones of whole birds before storing in fridge or freezer.

Storage Chart

(from "packaged on" date or purchase date from butcher)*

	Fridge*	Freezer
Ground meats/poultry, fresh seafood	1 day	2-3 months
Variety meats (e.g. liver, kidney, heart)	1-2 days	3-4 months
Stew meat, ribs, stir-fry strips, kabobs	2 days	3-6 months
Whole chicken/turkey or pieces	2-3 days	<small>pieces 6 months whole 12 months</small>
Steaks, roasts, chops	3 days	8-12
Cooked meats/poultry, cold cuts (open pkg)	3-4 days	2-3 months
Vacuum packed roasts/steaks (unopened)	See pkg date	10-12
Fresh shell eggs	See best before date	<small>For egg freezing instructions visit eggs.ca</small>

You can't tell if food is safe by smelling or looking at it. IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT.

Refrigerator defrosting is the safest way to thaw.



Refrigerate perishables at less than 40°F (4°C).



Separate: Don't cross-contaminate.

Keep raw meat/poultry/seafood and their juices separate from one another and other foods during storage and preparation.

- When shopping, keep packages of meat/poultry/seafood in bags separate from other groceries.
- **Prevent meat/poultry/seafood juices from dripping onto other foods in the fridge** – place on a plate and store on the bottom shelf.
- Place washed produce in clean containers, not back into their original unwashed packaging.
- Store eggs in their original carton to prevent them from absorbing odours and flavours from other foods.
- Wash scissors or blades used to cut open food packages.
- **Ideally use two cutting boards: one for raw meat/ poultry/seafood; the other for cooked foods and washed fruits/vegetables.**

- **Clean and sanitize cutting boards** using hot soapy water followed by a mild bleach solution (1 tsp/5 mL bleach: 3 cups/750 mL water); rinse. Plastic cutting boards can be cleaned and sanitized in the dishwasher.
- **When checking cooked foods for seasoning, don't "double dip"** – once you've done your tasting, don't put the tasting spoon back into the pot.
- When basting, brush sauce on cooked surfaces only. Be careful not to add sauce with a brush previously used on raw meat/poultry/seafood.
- **Once marinade has been in contact with raw meat discard or bring to a rolling boil for 1 minute before using as a basting or dipping sauce. Do not reuse.**
- Remove stuffing from poultry immediately after roasting or cook stuffing separately.

Use one plate or platter for raw meat/poultry/seafood and another for cooked.



Keep foods covered.



Cook: Cook meat, poultry and eggs to proper temperatures.

Don't rely on the 'colour test' to know when meats are done (especially burgers and meatloaves).

- Use a food thermometer or temperature indicator. This is the **ONLY** way to tell if your food has reached a high enough internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria.
- To know when burgers are done, check patty temperatures with a proper thermometer. Research shows that the colour of cooked ground beef can vary – beef burger patties may be brown in the centre before being cooked to a safe temperature.
- Enjoy steaks and roasts at medium-rare to medium doneness. Bacteria usually exist on the surface of these whole muscle cuts and are eliminated once the outside of the meat is well cooked. Note: Rolled steaks/roasts and fresh meats labelled "seasoned" should be cooked to medium doneness.
- Don't bring meat/poultry/seafood to room temperature before cooking.
- Finish cooking partially cooked meat/poultry/seafood immediately – do not hold to finish cooking at a later time.
- Serve cooked eggs or egg-rich foods (like rice pudding) immediately after cooking or refrigerate promptly and serve within 2 to 3 days.
- Stuff poultry just before cooking, stuffing loosely – no more than two-thirds full.
- Use the Temperature Rules chart on next page, for safe doneness temperatures regardless of thermometer manufacturer's guidelines.



Temperature Rules for Safe Doneness

(Canadian Industry Standards)

Ground beef/pork	160°F (71°C)
Ground chicken/turkey	175°F (80°C)
Beef, lamb and veal roast and steaks	145°F (63°C) Med-rare 160°F (71°C) Medium 170°F (77°C) Well
Pork chops/roasts/fresh cured ham	160°F (71°C) Medium
Ham, ready-to-eat, fully cooked	Cold or 140°F (60°C)
Whole turkey (stuffed) and chicken (stuffed or not)	180°F (82°C)
Stuffing	165°F (74°C)
Whole turkey (without stuffing)	170°F (77°C)
Chicken/turkey pieces	170°F (77°C)
Rolled stuffed beef roasts or steaks (e.g. London Broil)	160°F (71°C)
Minute Steak (or meat labelled Delicatzized/ Diced/Tenderized or Cubed Steak. NOT Fast-fry Steak)	160°F (71°C)
Egg dishes, casseroles	160°F (71°C)
Battered meat/seafood – Do not undercook. Cook following package directions	
Fresh meats marked "Seasoned" on label	160°F (71°C)
Leftovers, reheated	165°F (74°C)

Clip and post chart



The heat from cooking can kill bacteria.

Be a **GREAT** cook. Be a **SAFE** cook. Use a **food thermometer.**



Take the guesswork out of cooking –

Cook foods to **perfection**, so they are **tasty and juicy** - not overdone. **A food thermometer is an essential tool for a great cook.**

Keep your family safe –

Cook to **safe** internal temperatures. Be especially careful if you're cooking for those at high risk of serious illness from foodborne bacteria - infants/young children, pregnant women, older adults or those with chronic illness. Using a food thermometer or temperature indicator is the **ONLY** reliable way to test for safe internal temperatures.

An investment in safety –

Buy a digital instant-read thermometer or thermometer fork, that gives a temperature reading, not just a doneness range. Look for digital instant-read thermometers at quality hardware stores, cookware stores and restaurant equipment suppliers.

Thermometer Know-How

Rules of Thumb:

1. Take temperatures of thin foods like burgers within 1 minute of removal from heat, larger cuts like roasts, after 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Insert thermometer stem/indicator into the thickest part of the food, away from bone, fat or gristle.
3. Leave thermometer in food for at least 30 seconds before reading temperature.
4. When food has an irregular shape, like some beef roasts, check the temperature in several places.
- 5. Wash the thermometer stem thoroughly in hot, soapy water after each use!**
6. Review manufacturers' guidelines specific to the use of your thermometer or temperature indicator.



A food
thermometer
is an essential
tool for a
great cook.



Thermometers & Temperature Indicators

Some thermometers stay in foods while they cook; others do not. Some are ideal for checking thin foods like burgers or chicken breasts; others are good just for roasts or big pieces of foods.

We've test driven most of the varieties out there (in a price range under \$40) and have pulled together what you need to know to **choose** the type that's best for you!



**Digital Instant/
Rapid-Read
Thermometers**



- Good for all foods.
- Works well for both large cuts and thin pieces of meat/poultry.
- Those with a cable attachment allow you to monitor food temperature while cooking.



**Oven-Proof
Thermometers**

- Use in roasts, whole turkey, casseroles and meatloaves. For turkey, choose those with stems measuring at least 4 1/2" (11 cm) long.
- Do not use for thin foods like burgers, steaks, chops or chicken pieces.



**Dial Instant/
Rapid-Read
Thermometers**

- Use in roasts only.
- Not recommended for burgers, meatloaves, casseroles, steaks, chops or chicken pieces.



**Fork Thermometers/
Indicators**

- **Fork Thermometers:** (showing temperature readings) are good for all foods.
- **Fork Indicators:** (showing doneness ranges)* are best for large cuts of meat/poultry.



**Colour-Changing
Temperature
Indicators**

- Best for thin foods like burgers, chops, steaks and chicken breasts – using the Temperature Indicator that is specific for each food.
- Indicators showing specific temperatures are better for burgers than those showing just a doneness range.*



**Disposable/Reusable
Pop-Up Indicators**

- Use in roasts, whole chicken/turkey, using an indicator that is specific for each food.
- To correctly measure temperature, Pop-Up stem must reach the centre of the food.

* Doneness ranges should match temperatures indicated in Temperature Rules Chart.



How to Insert

• **For burgers, steaks, chops and chicken pieces:** near end of cooking, remove from heat and insert instant-read thermometer stem or fork thermometer tines sideways into the centre of patties or centre of thickest part of food. Insert to a depth of at least 1-1/2 inches (4 cm).

• **Whole chicken:** near end of cooking, remove from heat and insert instant-read thermometer stem starting at the thickest end of the breast, near the wing, so that the stem points in the direction of the drumsticks (parallel to and 1-1/2 inches (4 cm) from breast bone). If stuffed, check stuffing temperature by inserting thermometer stem into centre of stuffing.

• **Meatloaves, roasts, casseroles and egg dishes:** near end of cooking, remove from heat and insert instant-read thermometer stem into the centre of the thickest part of meat/casserole, to a depth of at least 1-1/2 inches (4 cm) OR for meatloaves/roasts, use oven-proof thermometer: prior to cooking, insert thermometer stem into the centre of the thickest part of the meat, avoiding bottom of pan.

• **Whole turkey:** prior to cooking, insert stem of oven-proof thermometer into the thickest part of the inner thigh meat, not touching thigh bone AND/OR near end of cooking, remove from heat and insert instant-read thermometer stem or fork thermometer tines into inner thigh meat (as above). If stuffed, check stuffing temperature by inserting thermometer stem into centre of stuffing.

Always wash the tongs, plate and thermometer stem used in checking partially cooked meats/poultry before using again.