

Nutrition News

Information for Senior Citizens

*Developed by Colorado State University Extension
Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition*

Fight Back . . . Against Foodborne Illness

Each year, one in ten Americans is affected by foodborne illness (also known as food poisoning). People who are very young or very old are especially at risk. Harmful bacteria found in food cause most of these illnesses. Bacteria and other microorganisms need three things to grow:

1. **Temperature:** bacteria grow fastest between 40°F and 140°F.
2. **Food:** examples: meat, poultry, fish, cheese, milk, cooked beans, cooked potatoes.
3. **Moisture:** foods such as meat, soups, and gravies contain a lot of water, ideal places for bacteria to grow.

The good news is that there are ways to reduce these bacteria in your food. Follow the guidelines outlined in this newsletter to help ensure that your food is safe to eat.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Fight Back... Against Foodborne Illness**
- 1 **Storage, Thawing, Preparation**
- 2 **Cooking, Separate, & Leftovers**
- 2 **Bacteria: Where Do They Hide?**
- 3 **Questions and Answers**
- 4 **Fitness Focus: Exercising**

Storage

- Keep meat, fish, and poultry refrigerated or frozen. Store raw items away from other foods.
- The refrigerator should be maintained at 40°F and the freezer at or below 0°F.
- Watch the expiration date on perishable food packages.

Thawing

Safe ways to thaw foods are:

- Placing in the refrigerator for 1 - 2 days.
- Microwaving - When using this method, you need to cook immediately after the food is thawed.
- Some foods can be cooked from the frozen state, such as pork chop, hamburger, steak, and vegetables.

Preparation

- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Wash working surfaces (especially the cutting board) and utensils (e.g. knives) after touching raw meat, poultry, or fish.



Cooking

- Cook thoroughly. Use a thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat and poultry. Beef and pork should be cooked to 170°F and poultry to 180°F.
- Cook fish until flesh is opaque and flakes with a fork.
- Cook eggs until firm, not runny. Use pasteurized eggs or egg product if a recipe calls for raw eggs.

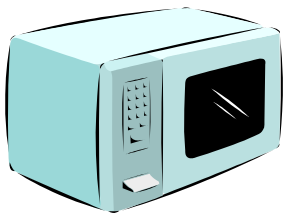


Separate

- Separate raw, cooked and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing or storing foods.

Leftovers

- Refrigerate leftovers immediately.
- Date all containers holding leftovers.
- Microwave properly. When you use the microwave to cook or reheat your food, make sure that the food is heated evenly. Stir the food after microwaving to distribute the heat.



For more information, contact your local Department of Health or you're nearest Cooperative Extension office.

Did you know . . .



It takes fewer than 100 bacteria (e.g., *E.coli* O157:H7) to make a person sick.



Foodborne illness is greatly under-reported.

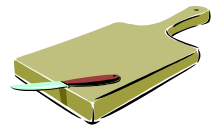
Bacteria: Where Do They Hide?

Bacteria can move from one food to another. They don't have feet, but they can get into food by cross contamination. For example, if raw meat comes into contact with a vegetable, the bacteria can be transferred from the raw meat to the vegetable. However, bacteria do not only live in food. They can be found in other places as well.

Dish towels: When it comes to drying your dishes, air drying is the best! Using a dish towel to dry your dishes may introduce bacteria to your clean dishes.

Hands: Remember to wash your hands with hot, soapy water, especially after you handle raw meat, fish, and poultry. Dry your hands on clean towels, not on your apron!

Cutting boards: Be sure to clean your cutting board after each use. Buy two cutting boards, one for meats and one for fruits and vegetables. This will help reduce cross contamination.



Food Stamps:

To find out if you or someone you know qualifies for food stamps, call 1-800-221-5689.

Questions and Answers



Q: Can I tell if my food is spoiled by smelling it?

A: No. It is difficult to determine whether or not food is spoiled by its smell, flavor, or appearance. If in doubt, throw it out!

Q: What are the signs and symptoms of foodborne illness?

A: Foodborne illness is greatly under-reported because signs and symptoms of foodborne illness may be mild. Some people think it is just an upset stomach. Diarrhea, bloody diarrhea (which has a "coffee grind" appearance), fever, vomiting, and cramps are some of the symptoms of foodborne illness. Symptoms may develop in a few hours, days, or even weeks.

If you suspect that you ate contaminated food, please contact your doctor and seek medical attention immediately. Also, be sure to inform your county health department, especially if you think it is a result of eating out.

Q: How can I reduce my risk for foodborne illness?

A: Follow the three T's:

Time: When hot and cold food is left on the counter, bacteria can begin to grow. Never leave food out for more than 2 hours.

Temperature: Cook meats, fish, and poultry well. Remember, bacteria grow fastest at 40 to 140° F. Try to keep hot and cold foods out of this "danger zone."

Take the time to clean: Wash your hands, dishes, cutting board, and sink before and after you prepare food.

Q: How long can I store my raw and cooked meat and poultry?

A:

Food	Refrigerator (days)	Freezer (months)
Raw		
Beef	3 to 5	6 to 12
Hamburger	1 to 2	3 to 4
Pork	3 to 5	4 to 6
Chicken	1 to 2	12
Turkey	1 to 2	12
Cooked		
Meat	3 to 4	2 to 3
Ham	7	1 to 2
Luncheon meats	3 to 5	1 to 2
Deli meats	1 to 2	1 to 2
Poultry		
with gravy	1 to 2	6
no gravy	3 to 4	4

Fitness Focus: Exercise

Exercise. You've heard it many times. "Exercise is good for you. You'll be healthier if you exercise." However, it is easier said than done. As a reminder, here are a few reasons why exercise is good for you. (Please consult your doctor before starting *any* exercise program.)

Benefits

- Exercise helps people to maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise improves your quality of life. You'll feel better both mentally and physically.
- If you have diabetes, exercise may help you keep better control of your blood sugar.



Tips to Get Started

- Set a time during the day to exercise. Write it on the calendar.
- Find a buddy. Ask a friend, neighbor, or family member to walk with you.
- Give yourself positive reinforcement. Place a gold star on your calendar every time you exercise.
- Set realistic goals. Don't overstrain yourself. Start with low intensity exercises (e.g., walking) a few times a week.
- Find an activity you enjoy—for example, a nice, quiet walk through your neighborhood with a friend.
- Talk to your doctor before you begin your exercise program. Your doctor can give you advice on how much and what kinds of exercise would benefit you most.

Hopefully, these benefits and tips will help you to begin thinking about starting your own exercise program. Be kind to yourself, you deserve it!