

# Food Safety Counts!



**CLEAN**



**SEPARATE**



**COOK**



**CHILL**

## Always Check Your Steps To Protect Your Family From Food Poisoning

You do everything that is possible to protect yourself and your family. Caring for your family also means following food safety precautions in your kitchen, just as you do in other areas of your daily life. The food you serve your family can cause food poisoning if it is not safely handled, cooked, or stored.

Food poisoning is a bigger risk than you think. Harmful bacteria like *E. coli* O157:H7, *Listeria*, or *Salmonella* can contaminate your food and cause





There are four simple food safety steps you can follow to keep your family safe from food poisoning.

## KEEP IT CLEAN

You wear safety belts in the car to avoid injuries during a collision, and you teach your children to look both ways before crossing the street. Steps like these protect your family from possible injury. It's just as important to wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.

Clean cooking surfaces and utensils with soap and hot water to remove harmful bacteria. For extra protection,

illness, such as abdominal cramps and diarrhea. Foodborne illness can also cause more serious consequences for those who are at risk, such as infants and young children; pregnant women; older adults; and people with immune systems weakened by cancer treatment, diabetes, AIDS, or bone marrow and organ transplants.

you can also sanitize surfaces by adding 1 tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of water.

Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating or serving them raw.

## SEPARATE YOUR FOOD

Dirty shoes in the house? Most parents try to keep them outside to prevent spreading dirt and germs. A similar precaution can be applied to food by keeping raw meats and their juices away from cooked foods to prevent spreading harmful bacteria. Use separate cutting boards and utensils, or wash them between uses, when preparing raw meat and vegetables.



Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria spread between foods.

Remember to separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from fruits, vegetables, and cooked foods when preparing meals and storing them in the refrigerator.

## COOK FOOD TO THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE

Carbon monoxide detectors are important for alerting you to dangerous gas inside your home. You don't rely on your senses of smell or sight to detect this hazard. It is just as important to use a food thermometer to make sure your cooked food is free of dangerous bacteria. You can't see, smell, or taste bacteria that causes food poisoning, but a food thermometer can indicate when your food has been cooked to a safe internal temperature. Just as you would keep a fire extinguisher handy in the kitchen, keep your food thermometer handy and teach your children why and how to use it.

### Tips For Using a Food Thermometer:

- Insert the food thermometer into the thickest part of the food, making sure it doesn't touch bone, fat, or gristle. For casseroles and other combination dishes, place the food thermometer in the center of the food. Egg dishes and foods containing ground meat and poultry should be checked in several places.
- There are three temperatures to remember: 160 °F (71.1 °C) for ground meats and egg dishes; 145 °F (62.8 °C) for beef, veal, pork, and lamb steaks, roasts, and chops (allow the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or consuming); and 165 °F (73.9 °C) for all poultry, casseroles, and reheating leftovers.

- Clean your food thermometer with soap and hot water before and after each use.

## CHILL PROMPTLY

Just as you set your water heater to a safe temperature to avoid potential burns, it is also important to maintain your refrigerator at a temperature setting that prevents the growth of harmful bacteria. Harmful bacteria grow quickly in the “Danger Zone” [temperatures between 40 and 140 °F (4.4 and 60 °C)].

### Refrigeration Tips:

- Maintain your refrigerator temperature at 40 °F (4.4 °C) or below.
  - Maintain your freezer temperature at 0 °F (-17.7 °C) or below.
- Divide cooked foods into small portions and place in shallow containers so they can cool down fast in the refrigerator.
  - Never defrost meat, poultry, or fish at room temperature. Defrost them in the refrigerator. You can also use cold water or a microwave oven, but cook immediately after thawing.
  - Don't leave food out for more than 2 hours or 1 hour at temperatures above 90 °F (32.2 °C).





## **Add These 4 Food Safety Steps to Your Home Safety Checklist:**

**Clean:** Wash hands, cutting boards, utensils and countertops.

**Separate:** Keep raw meat, seafood, and poultry away from ready-to-eat foods.

**Cook:** Cook food to the right temperature.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly.

**Check all your steps at [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov).**

# Food Safety Counts!



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

February 2013



For more information on food safety,  
call the **USDA Meat and Poultry  
Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline  
(1-888-674-6854)**  
or visit ***AskKaren.gov*** or  
***m.AskKaren.gov*** (mobile)