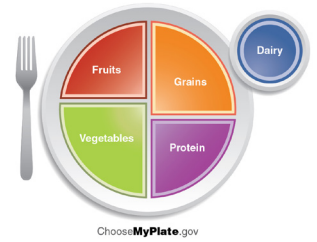




A Pioneering Area Agency on Aging

Preventing Foodborne Illness



Each year, roughly 48 million Americans get sick from food they eat. Of those, 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases. Reducing foodborne illness by just 1 percent would keep about 500,000 Americans from getting sick each year. The causes of foodborne illness are generally bacteria or viruses that contaminate foods or food preparation surfaces or utensils. Most can be stopped by following these four food safety practices.

Clean: Bacteria can be spread throughout the kitchen and get onto hands, cutting boards, utensils, counter tops and food. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Wash your dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food or task. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.

Separate: Cross-contamination is how bacteria can be spread. Improper handling of raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs can create an inviting environment for cross-contamination. Separate raw meat and eggs from other foods in your shopping cart, grocery bags and in your fridge. Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meats. Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat or eggs.

Cook: Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked meat, poultry and egg dishes, to make sure the food is cooked to a safe internal temperature:

- Fish to 145°F
- Roasts and steaks to 145°F
- Ground meat to 160°F
- Poultry to 165°F
- Re-heated leftovers to 165°F
- Sauces, soups, gravies to a boil
- Cook eggs until firm, not runny.

Remember, color is not an indicator of doneness. Always check the internal temperature at the thickest part with a food thermometer.

Make sure there are no cold spots in food (where bacteria can survive) when cooking in a microwave. For best results, cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking.

Chill: Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures slow the growth of bacteria. Do not over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to help keep food safe. Keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of 40°F or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. The freezer temperature should be 0°F or colder.

Refrigerate or freeze meat and other perishables as soon as you get them home from the store. Never let raw meat, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits and vegetables sit at room temperature more than two hours before putting them in the refrigerator or freezer (one hour when the temperature is above 90°F).

Never defrost food at room temperature. Food must be kept at a safe temperature during thawing. There are three safe ways to defrost food: in the refrigerator, in cold running water and in the microwave. Food thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.

Remember, when in doubt, throw it out!

Contact an Aging Partners registered dietitian at 402-441-7159 to learn more about food safety.



10 Common Foodborne Dangers

Each year, 1 in 6 Americans gets sick by consuming contaminated foods or beverages. Research these common foodborne germs to better protect yourself against foodborne illness.

C L O S T R I D I U M O I E T K O J M C
U Z V G C V P C T Z J F G C M U E V U Y
I E A B F H S L U E Y H B F I T Y A I C
D N O E K D Z R W N F Z E K O F Z O D L
S I S O I R E T C A B O L Y P M A C I O
R G S Z Q N G B W G K W Z Q O A M S R S
T T H I A S L I S T E R I A B V S H T P
S D I R X Q U Y A D L R R X K E I I S O
O R G G E P E R F R I N G E N S L G O R
L M E V Q I W Y I M T Q V Q D J U E L I
C V L Y C I Z G M V A G Y C K V T L C A
R N L L A A L L E N O M L A S N O L R S
I O A B I V N O I O I R B I V R B A I I
C C O O J A V O C C W D O J S Z U O C S
T G V G N Q T H M E S H G N B L Y V T C

1. **Botulism** - Improperly canned foods, especially home-canned vegetables, fermented fish, and baked potatoes in aluminum foil
2. **Campylobacteriosis** - Raw and undercooked poultry, unpasteurized milk, contaminated water
3. **Clostridium** - Meats poultry, gravy, dried or precooked foods, time and/or temperature-abused foods
4. **Cyclosporiasis** - Improperly handled fresh produce especially berries, lettuce, and fresh herbs
5. **E. coli** - Water and/or food contaminated with human feces
6. **Listeria** - Unpasteurized milk, soft cheeses made with unpasteurized milk. Likes colder temperatures around 41°F!
7. **Norovirus** - Raw produce, contaminated drinking water, uncooked foods, and cooked foods not properly reheated to above 165°F that have come into contact with an infected food handler
8. **Salmonella** - Eggs and poultry
9. **Shigella** - Raw produce, contaminated drinking water, uncooked foods, and cooked foods not properly reheated to above 165°F that have come into contact with an infected food handler
10. **Vibrio** - Undercooked or raw seafood, such as shellfish (especially oysters)