



# FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES

Client Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Food safety is important because your weakened immune system makes you more susceptible to food-borne illnesses and makes them more difficult to treat.

Food-borne illness is caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, molds, or parasites. Improper food handling causes most food-borne illness. Follow these basic food safety guidelines to reduce your risk of food-borne illness.

## Shopping

- Shop for food at stores that maintain high sanitary standards for both the facility and its staff.
- Shop for refrigerated and frozen foods last to prevent them from warming up while you shop.
- Place raw meat, poultry, and seafood in plastic bags and keep them separate from other foods in your shopping cart and grocery bags.
- Do not buy food with damaged packaging.
- Do not use foods after their *sell-by* or *best-used-by* date.
- Avoid foods in bulk containers such as nuts, candies, or granola, unless you will be cooking them prior to eating.
- Do not purchase precut vegetables or fruits unless you will cook them before eating.
- Use only pasteurized milk and cheese products. Look for the word *pasteurized* on the label.
- Avoid unpasteurized, fresh-squeezed fruit or vegetable juices and cider. Frozen concentrates,

shelf-stable juice in airtight sealed containers, and canned juices are processed to eliminate harmful bacteria.

- Avoid unpasteurized or raw honey; it may contain bacteria.
- Avoid Camembert, Brie, feta, and blue mold cheeses.
- Avoid raw sprouts such as alfalfa, clover, and radish.
- Do not select fruits and vegetables that are moldy, bruised, or damaged. Fruits and vegetables should look fresh.
- Do not choose food displayed in an unsafe way such as raw fish on the same bed of ice with cooked fish, or samples left out on a counter.
- Return home quickly to put away chilled and frozen foods. Carrying food around in the car for even a couple of hours can allow bacteria to grow to unsafe levels.

## Food Storage and Handling

- Keep refrigerated food at or below 40°F and frozen food at or below 0°F. Use refrigerator and freezer thermometers to ensure proper temperatures. They are available at most kitchen stores and supermarkets.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from other foods in your refrigerator and while preparing and handling foods.
- Keep fresh eggs refrigerated in their original container.
- Keep shelves, countertops, refrigerators, freezers, utensils, sponges, and towels clean.
- Use separate, labeled cutting boards for raw meat and for fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Use caution with wood cutting boards and discard them if heavily worn with cracks or grooves.

**Improper food handling causes most food-borne illness.**

- Wash cutting boards in the dishwasher or with hot, soapy water after each use, then sanitize with a bleach solution (one teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach per quart of water), rinse, and air dry or pat dry with paper towels.
- Wash produce with water and a brush before peeling, slicing, cooking, or eating.
- Wash leaves of leafy vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, and cabbage individually under lukewarm running water.
- Rinse prepackaged salads or vegetables even if labeled as *prewashed*.
- Wipe tops of cans with a clean cloth before opening.
- Thaw frozen meats in the refrigerator or microwave, not at room temperature.
- Store leftovers on the upper shelves of the refrigerator and raw foods on the lower shelves.
- Do not over-pack foods in the refrigerator or freezer. This assures that all items in the refrigerator remain properly cooled.

### Food Preparation

- Wash your hands before preparing meals or snacks.
- Cover cuts or open sores on the hand with a plastic sealing bandage or wear plastic gloves while preparing food.
- Use a kitchen thermometer to check food temperatures. They are available at most kitchen stores and supermarkets.
- Do not keep raw meats or prepared foods such as casseroles and potato salad in the refrigerator for more than 72 hours (three days). If you will not be consuming foods within this time, you can freeze them.
- When cooking animal products, use a clean plate for cooked items. Do not use the same plate that held the raw meat.
- Never eat raw or undercooked eggs. Both yolk and white must be firm, not runny.
- Cook food items that contain eggs thoroughly. Substitute a pasteurized egg product for raw eggs in homemade Caesar salad dressing, ice cream, and mayonnaise.

- Follow the standing times recommended on the package to ensure food reaches its proper internal temperature when cooked in a microwave.
- Do not allow foods to stand at room temperature for more than two hours. When temperatures are above 90°F (32°C), shorten this time to one hour.
- Heat prepackaged deli meat and poultry products such as hot dogs, sliced roast beef, turkey, and chicken breasts until they are steaming hot (165°F).
- Never taste food that looks or smells like it might have gone bad.

### Cook foods to the following temperatures:

<b>Poultry</b>	<b>180°F</b>
<b>Red Meat</b>	<b>165°F</b>
<b>Pork</b>	<b>170°F</b>
<b>Fish</b>	<b>160°F</b>
<b>Reheated Leftovers</b>	<b>165°F</b>

Use a food thermometer to check food temperatures.

### Eating Out

- Ask your doctor when it is safe for you to dine out or eat take-out foods.
- When choosing a restaurant, look for cleanliness of plates, utensils, and glasses; staff; and restrooms.
- Dine during off-peak hours and ask for an isolated table.
- Avoid salad bars, potlucks, sidewalk vendors, delicatessens, smorgasbords, and other buffet-style dining.
- Follow the same food restrictions when you go out to eat as you follow at home. Ask about ingredients in a particular dish before ordering.
- Ask for well-done meats, fish, eggs, and poultry.
- Check for doneness by cutting into the center of a piece of meat. If it is bloody or pink, send it back for more cooking.
- Fish should be flaky, not rubbery, when cut.
- Avoid raw meat, poultry, and fish such as oysters on the half-shell, raw clams, sushi, and sashimi. Foods

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made with raw fish are more likely to contain parasites or bacteria than foods made from cooked fish.

- Avoid raw fruits and vegetables when eating out.
- Make sure fruit and vegetable juices are pasteurized, not fresh-squeezed.
- Do not use public self-serve condiments. Ask for individual condiment packets or for an unopened container that you can open yourself.
- In fast-food establishments, ask that your food be prepared fresh.
- Ask your server to deliver your meal promptly as soon as it is prepared.
- Leave the leftovers at the restaurant if you will not be arriving home within two hours of being served. If you do take leftovers with you, refrigerate them immediately.
- Do not use restaurant delivery services. The food may be in transit too long.
- Select food with care when traveling abroad. Any raw food can be contaminated. Cooked foods that are served hot are generally considered safe. Avoid unpasteurized milk and milk products, raw meat, raw shellfish, raw vegetables, and fresh fruit unless you clean and peel it yourself.

## Water

- Do not use unchlorinated water. If your water source is a well, the health department should test it yearly for coliforms and cryptosporidium. Have your well water tested before returning home from the hospital. Test more frequently if the well is at risk for contamination (such as if construction, flooding, or spring runoff occur near the well or if the well is shallow or near a livestock herd).
- Use bottled water if you have any doubts about the quality of your tap water.
- Drink only bottled water when traveling abroad. Do not use ice in any beverage unless it was made from boiled or bottled water.

**Report food-borne illness to your  
doctor and local health department.**

For more information about safe food handling, visit [foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov) or call the FDA's toll-free information line at 888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366).

The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline can answer food safety questions about meat and poultry. Call 1-800-535-4555 toll free.