

Food Safety Fact Sheet

Foodborne illnesses are caused by microorganisms present in food

Foodborne organisms may be bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, or *E. coli* O157:H7, virus, and parasites. They can contaminate many different foods—meat, milk, fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs, fruit, and fresh vegetables, to name a few. These organisms, or toxins they produce, may make you sick.

Many foodborne illnesses occur because of the way food is handled and prepared

You can help prevent these infections by not giving harmful microorganisms a chance to multiply and/or contaminate foods. If you suspect that you have handled or prepared any food incorrectly, it is better to throw it away or consult a food safety information service before serving or eating it.

Tips for keeping food safe:

■ Wash hands with soap and warm water:

- Before and after preparing food
- After handling raw meat or poultry
- Before handling ready-to-eat food, such as salads or sandwiches
- After handling anything that may contaminate your hands

■ Prevent cross-contamination of foods with raw foods

- Keep raw meats and poultry separate from other foods.
- Thaw foods on a plate in the refrigerator on the lowest shelf possible. Don't allow their juices to drip on other foods.
- Clean and disinfect cutting boards and kitchen surfaces after preparing different food. It is best to clean with hot soapy water, then sanitize with a bleach solution. Be sure to rinse well.

■ Cook foods thoroughly

- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly. Using an accurate meat thermometer is the best way to ensure that food is thoroughly cooked.
- Do not taste or eat raw, rare, or even pink ground meat or poultry in any form.
- Cook seafood until it is opaque and flaky.
- Do not eat raw shellfish, such as oysters or clams, even if it is marinated.
- Cook eggs thoroughly; they should be firm and not runny.
- Avoid eating foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs, like some Caesar salad dressings.

■ Store foods properly

- Refrigerate and freeze perishable foods right away.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or microwave oven, not the kitchen counter or sink.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold after they are prepared.
- Do not leave perishable food at room temperature for longer than two hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in shallow containers or tightly wrapped bags.