

FOUR STEPS TO HANDLING AND PREPARING FOOD SAFELY

Practice these four steps to prevent foodborne illness at home:

1. CLEAN

Wash hands and surfaces often.

Wash your hands with soapy water and surfaces, such as cutting boards, with hot soapy water before and after handling food items. Additionally, consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them frequently in hot water.

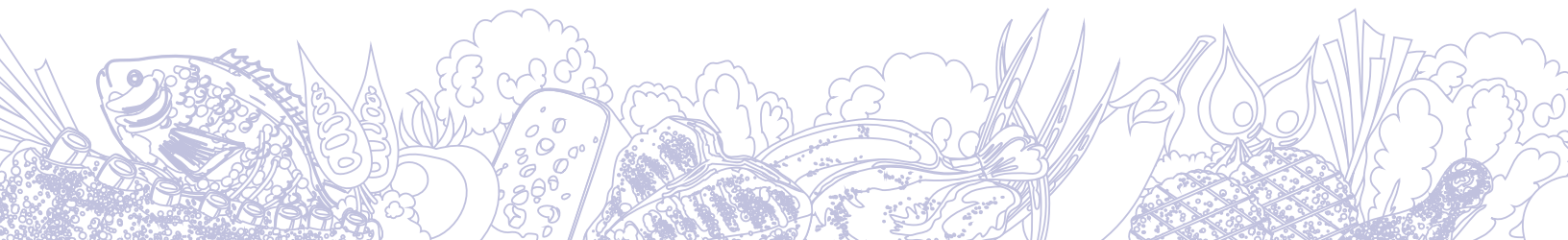
Always be sure to rinse fresh produce, including those with skins and rinds. Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush.



2. SEPARATE

Separate raw meats from other foods.

When storing and preparing food, separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods, especially foods that won't be cooked like salad vegetables. Be sure to never place salads, other ready-to-eat foods, or cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs. Avoid reusing marinades used on raw foods unless you bring them to a boil first.





3. COOK

Cook foods to a safe internal temperature. Use a food thermometer to know when foods reach a safe internal temperature.

Safe minimum internal temperatures as measured with a food thermometer:

FOOD TYPE	INTERNAL TEMPERATURE	
Beef, Pork, Veal, and Lamb (chops, roasts, steaks)	145°F	With a 3-minute rest time
Ground Meat	160°F	
Ham, uncooked (fresh or smoked)	145°F	With a 3-minute rest time
Ham, fully cooked (to reheat)	140°F	
Poultry (ground, parts, whole, and stuffing)	165°F	
Eggs	—	Cook until yolk and white are firm
Egg Dishes	160°F	
Fin Fish	145°F	Or, flesh is opaque and separates easily with fork
Shrimp, Lobster, and Crabs	—	Flesh pearly and opaque
Clams, Oysters, and Mussels	—	Shells open during cooking
Scallops	—	Flesh is milky white or opaque and firm
Leftovers and Casseroles	165°F	

4. CHILL

Refrigerate foods promptly.

Set your refrigerator to 40°F or below and your freezer to 0°F or below. Always refrigerate your meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, and other perishables—like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms—within 2 hours of purchasing. When you're ready to cook frozen foods, never thaw at room temperature. There are three ways to thaw safely: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave. If you thaw food in cold water, change the water every half hour to make sure it stays cold. Foods thawed in the microwave must be cooked immediately after thawing. Also, always keep food in the refrigerator while it's marinating.

TAKE ACTION

If you or a family member has any of these foodborne illness symptoms, **contact your healthcare provider immediately:**

- High fever (temperature over 101.5°F, measured orally).
- Blood in the stools.
- Prolonged vomiting that prevents keeping liquids down (which can lead to dehydration).
- Signs of dehydration, including a decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up.
- Diarrheal illness that lasts more than 3 days.

LEARN MORE

For more information on handling and preparing food, review the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [Safe Food Handling fact sheet](#). Or, visit the [FDA website](#).