

Ten Tips for Consumer Food Safety

By following a few simple measures, you can help protect yourself and your family from food-borne illness caused by harmful bacteria.

1. Buy from reputable food sources. Be careful of truck sales or street vendors. Check “use by” or “sell by” dates on products. Buy only intact packages and cans. Avoid those that are misshapen, dented or rusty.
2. Read food labels for ingredients, including food additives. If sensitive or concerned about certain food additives, limit consumption of foods containing those substances. Buy a variety of foods to avoid overconsumption of any particular substance.
3. Take foods home immediately from the grocery store or market and store properly. Do not leave foods in the danger zone temperature range (40 degrees F to 140 degrees F) for more than 2 hours.
4. Keep all work surfaces and utensils clean and sanitize them frequently. Sanitize with a solution of 2 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.
5. Discard spoiled food. If in doubt, throw it out!
6. Wash fresh fruits and vegetables under cold running tap water to remove any dirt. This also reduces bacteria that may be present. If the produce has a firm surface, such as apples or potatoes, a clean brush can be used to scrub the surface. Peeling produce reduces the risk of residues and bacteria, but may reduce a source of valuable nutrients (found in the peel).
7. Thaw foods safely in the refrigerator or properly in the microwave not on the counter. Cook foods immediately after thawing.
8. Cook all food thoroughly to the safe internal temperature.
9. Maintain adequate temperatures in the refrigerator (40 degrees F or below) and freezer (0 degrees F or below).
10. Refrigerate leftovers promptly. Place in small, shallow covered containers. Reheat leftovers until hot and steaming to 165 degrees F and gravies or “wet” foods to a rolling boil.

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