



**Tanya Davis**  
Texas AgriLife Extension Service  
County Extension Agent – Family and Community Health  
206 S. State Street, Suite A  
Decatur, Texas 76234  
Ph: 940.627.3341 Fax: 940.627.8070

---

## **Wise Notes for Consumers**

Submitted: 7-20-18

### **Handling Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Safely**

This summer, I have had several conversations with Wise County Consumers concerning fresh produce and food safety. It is important to keep in mind that fresh produce may become contaminated with bacteria, viruses, and parasites at any point during its farm to table journey.

Following are steps and tips to ensure that we as consumers follow correct procedures in order to ensure our food is safe to eat.

- Wash hands with hot soapy water, for at least 20 seconds, before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash all fresh produce under cool, running water before peeling, cutting or eating.
- Fragile items and soft fruits like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries can be washed using a sink sprayer or running water from the tap. Place fruit in a colander and gently turn the fruit as you spray or run with water.
- Scrubbing with a clean brush is only recommended for produce with a tough rind or peel (i.e. carrots, potatoes, cucumbers, and squash) that will not be bruised or scratched by the brush bristles. Fruit/vegetable brushes should be placed in the dishwasher, or washed with hot soapy water, rinsed, and sanitized. Brushes can be sanitized by soaking for one minute in a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach in 1 quart water.
- Throw away outer leaves of leafy vegetable like lettuces, cabbage before washing.

*Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national orientation. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.*

- Do not wash fruits and vegetables with bleach or soaps – it can absorb into the product and change the taste. Detergent was not made to be eaten and is not approved for use on food by the Food and Drug Administration.
- Wax coatings are used on some produce to keep in the moisture and keep good quality. These are safe to eat or you can cut it off.
- Leafy green salads in sealed bags labeled "washed", "triple washed", or "ready-to-eat" do not need additional washing at the time of use unless specially directed on the label.

Keep in mind that the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables outweigh the possible presence of pesticides. The FDA, USDA and EPA strictly control pesticides. If there is any pesticide residue on the fruit or vegetable, it should be under the regulations and safe to eat. A lot of the pesticides are water-soluble and will come off with water, which is another reason to wash fruit and vegetables before you eat them.

Drying produce with a paper towel may further reduce bacteria that may be present. Drying is not necessary for items that will be cooked. Greens like spinach, chard, kale and collards should be cooked wet as drying them may affect the quality of the cooked product.

For additional information on safe handling of fruits and vegetables as well as safe preparation techniques contact the Extension office at 940/627-3341.

*Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national orientation. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.*