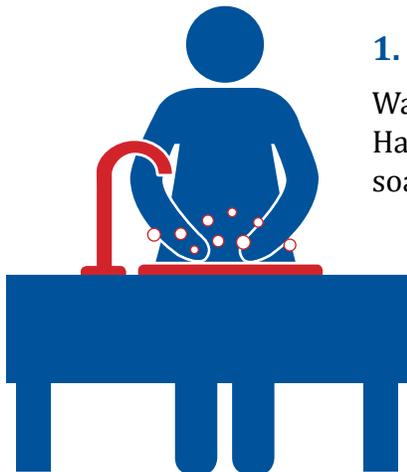




Preparing Food – 10 Steps to Make Food Safe

Eating foods or drinking beverages contaminated by germs can cause food poisoning or food-borne illness. The food or beverage becomes contaminated when it is not prepared or stored safely, or if it is handled by someone with food poisoning.

Follow these steps to help reduce the risk of food poisoning or food-borne illness.



1. Wash your hands

Wash your hands properly before you eat and handle food. Hand washing includes scrubbing all parts of your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds and rinsing them under warm water. Dry hands with a clean cloth or paper towel.

2. Wash and Sanitize Surfaces and Utensils

Always wash and sanitize surfaces where you prepare and place foods. Many cases of food poisoning and contamination are caused by using the same cutting board, plate or utensil to prepare raw meat and ready-to-eat foods. Cutting boards, plates and utensils must always be

washed and sanitized immediately before foods are placed on them.

Use the 3-Step Sink Method for washing: wash, rinse and sanitize (with bleach or a sanitizing solution).

It is important to wash dishcloths. Warm and damp dishcloths can be ideal breeding grounds for germs. They are often used to wipe contaminated surfaces and can spread harmful germs to areas where food are placed. Dishcloths must be sanitized regularly. You can make a sanitizing solution as follows:

- Mix ½ ounce or 1 tablespoon of household bleach into 1 gallon of water at normal room temperature, or
- Mix 1 teaspoon of household bleach into 1 litre of water.

3. Protect your food

Transport and refrigerate your perishable food as quickly as possible. Cover or wrap ready-to-eat foods and store them in the fridge above uncooked food. Always read the label for storage instructions.

4. Prepare food

Harmful germs can be spread from people to the food being prepared or handled. Some of these, such as Salmonella, Hepatitis A and E.coli are then passed on to people who eat the food. This can make people sick. Therefore, any person who gets sick or has diarrhea or vomiting, or infected cuts or sores, should not be allowed to handle food in any way.



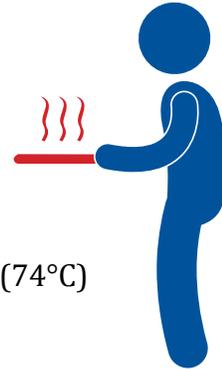


5. Cook it

Many foods may contain harmful germs. Meats, poultry, fish and eggs are some examples of food that contain these. Remember to cook the following foods to these temperatures before you eat them.

- Cook steaks, fish fillets and eggs to a minimum of 145°F (63°C)
- Cook pork and ground fish or meat to 160°F (71°C)
- Cook poultry, field dressed wild game and stuffed meats to 165°F (74°C)

Some oven thermostats are inaccurate, so remember to use a clean meat thermometer (put into the deepest part of the food, but do not touch a bone) to make sure the proper cooking temperature has been reached.



6. Cool it

Improper cooling is one of the leading causes of food poisoning. Do not leave food to cool on the counter for longer than two hours. To save cooked food, separate large items such as roasts or soups into portions no more than three inches thick and place in the refrigerator or freezer within two hours.

7. Reheat food

To make sure the food you are reheating is safe, reheat to at least 165°F (74°C).

8. Microwave cooking

Microwave cooking is fast, however, the heat distribution is uneven. Stir or rotate food in the microwave at least once during cooking to improve heat distribution.

Heat food in the microwave to at least 25°F (14°C) higher than is recommended for conventional heating. Food reheated in microwave ovens needs to reach 190°F (88°C) and be allowed to stand covered for two minutes afterwards.

9. Avoid the Danger Zone

Harmful germs can grow rapidly between 40°F (4°C) and 140°F (60°C). Therefore, food such as meat, poultry, dairy products, and eggs must be kept warmer than 140°F (60°C) or colder than 40°F (4°C). Always defrost food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave (if you plan on using it immediately). Do not leave frozen food to thaw on the counter.

10. If in doubt, throw it out

Finally, do not take chances with your food. Contaminated food may not look or smell bad so if in doubt, throw it out.

If you suspect a medicine, chemical or other substance has poisoned someone, call the Poison Control Centre, 911 or your local emergency number.

Adapted from BC Healthlink File #59a, "Food Safety: Ten Easy Steps to Make Food Safe"