FOOD SAFETY

Safe steps in food handling, cooking, and storage are essential to prevent foodborne illness. In every step of food preparation, follow four basic steps to keep food safe.

Clean

- Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food, changing diapers, or using the toilet.
- After cutting raw meats, wash cutting board, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water.

Separate

- Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other food.
- Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the refrigerator.

Cook

- Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb, and veal **steaks** to an internal temperature of 145°F, and raw **ground** beef, pork, lamb, and veal to an internal temperature of 160°F as measured with a food thermometer.
- Cook all poultry to an internal temperature of 165°F as measured with a food thermometer.

Chill

- Perishable food should not be left out more than 2 hours at room temperature – 1 hour if the temperature was above 90°F.
- Keep your refrigerator set at 40°F or below. Use a fridge thermometer to check.

Milk, Cheese, and Dairy

Pasteurization and Myths about Raw Milk

Pasteurization is a process that kills harmful bacteria by heating milk to a specific temperature for a set period of time. Some people continue to believe that pasteurization harms milk and that raw milk is a safe healthier alternative. Raw milk can harbor dangerous microorganisms, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*, that can pose serious health risks to you and your family.

Here are some proven facts about milk and pasteurization:

- Raw milk DOES NOT kill dangerous pathogens by itself.
- Pasteurizing milk DOES NOT cause lactose intolerance and allergic reactions. Both raw milk and pasteurized milk can cause allergic reactions in people sensitive to milk proteins.
- Pasteurization DOES NOT reduce milk's nutritional value.
- Pasteurization DOES NOT mean that it is safe to leave milk out of the refrigerator for extended time, particularly after it has been opened.
- Pasteurization DOES kill harmful bacteria.
- Pasteurization DOES save lives.

Cheese

When pregnant women eat Mexican-style soft cheeses, they are putting their unborn babies at risk!

Ice Cream

To avoid the risk of *salmonella* infection, use a pasteurized egg product instead of raw eggs.

DCHHS
Safe families, healthy lives.
Dallas County Health and Human Services

Zachary Thompson, Director
Dr. Christopher Perkins, Medical Director/Health Authority
2377 N. Stemmons Frwy.
Dallas, Texas 75207
www.dallascounty.org

Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Your local markets carry an amazing variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that are both nutritious and delicious. However, harmful bacteria that may be in the soil or water where produce grows may come in contact with fruits and vegetables and contaminate them. Fresh produce may also become contaminated after it is harvested, such as during preparation or storage. Eating contaminated produce (or fruit and vegetable juices made from contaminated produce) can lead to foodborne illness, often called "food poisoning." As you enjoy fresh produce and fresh-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices, follow these safe handling tips to help protect yourself and your family.

Buy Right: You can help keep produce safe by making wise buying decisions at the grocery store.

- Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged.
- When selecting pre-cut produce — such as a half a watermelon or bagged salad greens — choose only those items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- Bag fresh fruits and vegetables separately from meat, poultry and seafood products when packing them to take home from the market.

Store Properly: Proper storage of fresh produce can affect both quality and safety.

- Store perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms) in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40°F or below. If you're not sure whether an item should be refrigerated to maintain quality, ask your grocer.
- Refrigerate all produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled to maintain both quality and safety.

Separate for Safety: Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry, or seafood — and from kitchen utensils used for those products. Take these steps to avoid cross-contamination:

- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with soap and hot water between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, and seafood products and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked.
- If you use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use.

Prepare Safely: When preparing any fresh produce, begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water *before* and *after* preparation.

- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.
- Wash all produce thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking. This includes produce grown conventionally or organically at home, or purchased from a grocery store or farmer's market. Washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes is not recommended.
- Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first so dirt and bacteria aren't transferred from the knife onto the fruit or vegetable.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.

Nuts, Grains, and Beans

Nuts, grains, beans, and other legumes, and their by-products, are found in a wide variety of foods. Since these foods are ingredients in so many food products, contamination or mislabeling of allergens can pose a widespread risk.

Contamination may come from harmful bacteria such as *salmonella.* Some foods in these categories, particularly grains, are also susceptible to chemical environmental risks.

Several of these foods – including tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans – have been classified as major food allergens by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The law requires that all foods are labeled with their ingredients, and that labels clearly identify any of the **major food allergens or their protein derivatives.**

Eggs and Egg Products

Eggs are one of nature's most nutritious and economical foods. But, you must take special care with handling and preparing fresh eggs and egg products to avoid food poisoning.

Cooking Eggs

Thorough cooking is an important step in making sure eggs are safe.

- **Scrambled eggs:** Cook until firm, not runny.
- **Fried, poached, boiled, or baked:** Cook until both the white and the yolk are firm.
- **Egg mixtures, such as casseroles:** Cook until the center of the mixture reaches 160°F when measured with a food thermometer.

Egg Recipes

- Homemade ice cream and eggnog are safe if you do one of the following:
    - Use a cooked egg-milk mixture. Heat it gently and use a food thermometer to ensure that it reaches 160°F.
    - Use pasteurized eggs or egg products.
- Dry meringue shells, divinity candy, and 7-minute frosting are safe — these are made by combining hot sugar syrup with beaten egg whites. However, avoid icing recipes using uncooked eggs or egg whites.
- Meringue-topped pies should be safe if baked at 350°F for about 15 minutes. But avoid chiffon pies and fruit whips made with raw, beaten egg whites. Instead, substitute pasteurized dried egg whites, whipped cream, or a whipped topping.
- Adapting Recipes: If your recipe calls for uncooked eggs, make it safe by doing one of the following:
    - Heating the eggs in one of the recipe's other liquid ingredients over low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture reaches 160°F. Then, combine it with the other ingredients and complete the recipe. Or use pasteurized eggs or egg products.
    - Using pasteurized eggs or egg products.

Note: Egg products, such as liquid or frozen egg substitute, are pasteurized, so it is safe to use them in recipes that will not be cooked. However, it is best to use egg products in a recipe that will be cooked, especially if you are serving pregnant women, babies, young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

Beverages and Juice

Juices provide many essential nutrients, but consuming untreated juices can pose health risks to your family. There have been serious outbreaks of foodborne illness that have been traced to drinking fruit and vegetable juice and cider that has not been treated to kill harmful bacteria.

While most people's immune systems can usually fight off the effects of foodborne illness, children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems risk serious illnesses or even death from drinking untreated juices.

Warning Labels

Since 1999, the FDA has required juice manufacturers to place warning information on product containers about the health risks of drinking untreated juice or cider. Only a small portion of all fruit and vegetable juices sold in supermarkets ***is not*** treated to kill harmful bacteria. These products are required to carry the following warning label:
WARNING: This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.

You should note that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration ***does not*** require warning labels for juice or cider that is fresh-squeezed and sold by the glass, such as at apple orchards, farmer's markets, roadside stands, or in some juice bars. If you're unsure if a glass of juice or cider has been treated, be sure to ask.

2 Simple Steps to Juice Safety: When purchasing juice, take these two simple steps to protect from foodborne illness.

1. Always read the label

Look for the warning label to avoid the purchase of untreated juices. You can find pasteurized or otherwise treated products in your grocers' refrigerated sections, frozen food cases, or in non-refrigerated containers, such as juice boxes, bottles, or cans. Untreated juice is most likely to be sold in the refrigerated section of a grocery store.

2. When in doubt, ask!

Always ask if you are unsure if a juice product is treated, especially for juices sold in refrigerated cases of grocery or health food stores, cider mills, or farm markets. Also, don't hesitate to ask if the labeling is unclear or if the juice or cider is sold by the glass.

Did You Know?

When fruits and vegetables are fresh-squeezed, bacteria from the produce can end up in your juice or cider. Unless the produce or the juice has been treated to destroy any harmful bacteria, the juice could be contaminated.

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