

# Food Safety Fact Sheet

## Washing Fruits and Vegetables

### INTRODUCTION

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be contaminated either when they are purchased or if they are handled incorrectly. Thorough washing of fruits and vegetables will minimize the risk of serving a contaminated product to customers.

### HERE ARE THE FACTS

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be exposed to harmful bacteria because of growing conditions and handling by humans. Some fruits such as cantaloupes have a very rough rind that can trap dirt and bacteria. Because these products are not cooked, they can cause foodborne illness if not handled properly.

### APPLICATION

#### Follow safe practices when handling fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Wash hands using the proper procedure before handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Wash, rinse, sanitize, and air dry all food contact surfaces, equipment, and utensils that will be in contact with fresh produce. This includes cutting boards, knives, and sinks. Always use sinks designated for food preparation.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for proper use of chemicals. For example, using sanitizers at too high a concentration may cause contamination of the produce.
- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before combining with other ingredients, including the following:
  - ◊ Unpeeled fresh fruit and vegetables that are served whole or cut into pieces, and
  - ◊ Fruits and vegetables that are peeled and cut to use in cooking or served ready-to-eat.
- Wash fresh produce vigorously under cold running water or by using chemicals that comply with the FDA *Food Code* or your state or local health department. It is not recommended to rewash packaged fruits and vegetables labeled as being previously washed and ready-to-eat.
- Remove any damaged or bruised areas of the fruits and vegetables.
- Label, date, and refrigerate fresh-cut items.
- Serve cut melons within 7 days if held at 41 °F or below.
- Do NOT serve raw seed sprouts to highly susceptible populations such as preschool-age children.

#### Monitor handling procedures for fresh fruits and vegetables.

- Check fruits and vegetables visually to make sure they are properly washed, labeled, and dated.
- Check daily the quality of fruits and vegetables in cold storage.
- Check labels and use-by dates.





# Washing Fruits and Vegetables cont.

**Take corrective action if fresh fruits and vegetables are not handled properly.**

- Remove unwashed fruits and vegetables and wash them before they are served.
- Label and date fresh cut fruits and vegetables.
- Discard cut melons after 7 days.

**Remember, follow state or local health department requirements.**

## References

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