



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Food Safety is Important All Year

Food safety is important on holidays, special days, and every day of the year. It should always be a priority when food is being prepared or consumed. Everyone wants to eat food that has been stored, prepared, and cooked properly. In cases where food has not been properly stored or refrigerated, there is an opportunity for bacteria to grow. Proper care of food is important from start to consumption. This includes purchasing, growing, storing, cooking, and eating the food. Let's talk about the different steps of food safety: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

The first step is **Clean**. Why is cleanliness important? Bacteria that can cause illness are everywhere; this includes on your hands and the dishes and utensils you use. If your hands, dishes, or utensils are not clean, they could have bacteria on them, and if you use unclean hands, dishes, utensils, or other items to prepare food, you could cause illness. What needs to be clean? Everything you work with needs to be clean. Make sure your hands, all utensils, bowls, cutting boards, and other items used during food preparation are clean.

Start with your hands. Your hands should be washed under running water and in a certain manner to wash away any bacteria that may cause an illness. Here are the steps:

- Wet your hands under warm, running water and apply soap. (You do not have to use antibacterial soap.)
- Rub your hands together, scrubbing all over, between your fingers, and under your nails. Scrubbing should last for 20 seconds. It is often said you can sing "Happy Birthday" twice in that amount of time. You can also observe a clock or watch.
- Rinse your hands well under running water; then, dry your hands with a clean paper towel. Turn the water off with a paper towel. If you need to exit the area after you have washed your hands, use a paper towel to open the door so you will not contaminate your hands.



When should you wash your hands?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before eating • While working in the kitchen • Before, during, and after you prepare food • After using the bathroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose • After handling raw food • After changing a baby's diaper • After helping a child in the bathroom |
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When it comes to washing raw food you eat, you should wash fresh fruits and vegetables just prior to peeling, eating, or preparing them. There could be bacteria on the outside of the fruit. If you cut the fruit or vegetable before washing it, you could spread the bacteria to the inside of the fruits or vegetables.



The second step is **Separate**. Why is it important to separate? Some foods require cooking, and temperatures will vary depending on the type of food you are cooking. The temperature that the food should reach is the temperature that will kill illness-causing bacteria for that particular food. Do not allow foods that will not be cooked to come in contact with foods that require cooking because of the possibility of cross-contamination. For example, juices from raw meat could contaminate fresh fruit if they come in contact. Fresh fruit is not cooked to a temperature

that will destroy the bacteria and that creates an opportunity for someone to eat contaminated food.

Always use separate cutting boards, plates, and cooking utensils for raw meats and cooked meats, as well as for any fresh foods that may not need cooking. Think about when you are shopping for food at the grocery store or market. Have separate bags for meats and vegetables so the juices from the meat won't contaminate the vegetables. Vegetables will not be cooked to a high enough temperature to kill the bacteria that could possibly be on the meat. Also keep different meats such as, beef, poultry, and seafood in separate bags because they each have to be cooked to different temperatures.

Cook is the next step. It's important to cook food to the correct temperature so the bacteria that causes foodborne illness will be killed. Use a calibrated thermometer to determine food has reached the appropriate temperature. You must have a thermometer, know how to calibrate it, and calibrate it often. The temperature for bacteria to multiply the quickest is between 40 °F to 140 °F, known as the "Temperature Danger Zone." After cooking food to the appropriate temperature, you should maintain the temperature at 140 °F by using a heat source of some type, such as a warming tray. Cooking temperatures vary depending on the food. The following link will provide you the safe minimum temperatures to which different foods should be cooked. <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>



The last step in preparing food safely that we will talk about is **Chill**. Bacteria that can cause illness can grow in foods within 2 hours. This is why it is important to keep hot food hot by using a heat source continuously or to chill it right away. If the weather temperature is 90 °F or higher, the 2 hour period is cut down to 1 hour. Cold temperatures will slow the growth of bacteria. Here is how you can maintain proper temperatures:

- Pack food in the refrigerator so that cold air can circulate; don't overload your refrigerator.
- Do not pack perishables in the door of the refrigerator.
- Place raw meats on the bottom shelf or in a meat drawer where the temperature can be adjusted. This will lengthen the viable storage time.

There is bacteria that can cause foodborne illness and bacteria that can cause food spoilage. Keep in mind, food that has not been refrigerated or has been left out of the refrigerator for hours may still look fine but may have bacteria multiplying in it; therefore, it becomes dangerous to eat. "When In Doubt, Throw It Out!"

To ensure the foods you serve are within food safety guidelines, make sure your hands are clean, and you are using clean dishes, utensils, and equipment. Use separate cutting boards and plates, and keep foods separate according to the temperature at which you will cook them. Always cook foods to their appropriate temperature. The appropriate temperature ensures food is done and any bacteria is killed. Finally, never let your food remain on the counter top indefinitely. Always refrigerate within 2 hours unless the outside temperature is 90 °F or higher, then you should refrigerate within 1 hour.

Reference

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Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures

Use this chart and a food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, and other cooked foods reach a safe minimum internal temperature.

Remember, you can't tell whether meat is safely cooked by looking at it. Any cooked, uncured red meats – including pork – can be pink, even when the meat has reached a safe internal temperature.

Why the Rest Time is Important

After you remove meat from a grill, oven, or other heat source, allow it to rest for the specified amount of time. During the rest time, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys harmful germs.

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)	Rest Time
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160	None
	Turkey, Chicken	165	None
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145	3 minutes
Poultry	Chicken & Turkey, whole	165	None
	Poultry breasts, roasts	165	None
	Poultry thighs, legs, wings	165	None
	Duck & Goose	165	None
	Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165	None
Pork and Ham	Fresh pork	145	3 minutes
	Fresh Ham (raw)	145	3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	140	None
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm	None
	Egg dishes	160	None
Leftovers & Casseroles	Leftovers	165	None
	Casseroles	165	None
Seafood	Fin Fish	145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.	None
	Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque.	None
	Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking.	None
	Scallops	Cook until flesh is milky white or opaque and firm.	None

Adapted from Foodsafety.gov

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>