

Preventing food-borne illness:

At the store:

- Pick up refrigerated or frozen items after selecting all the non-perishable items
- Do not select cans that have rusting tops, are bulging or dented. Also do not select jars that are cracked or that have loose or bulging lids.
- Check the carton of eggs to make sure it was refrigerated and that none of the eggs are cracked
- Do not buy seafood, if the package is torn
- Avoid purchasing produce that is bruised or damaged
- Pay attention to expiration dates
- When packing groceries at the store, bag fresh produce separate from meat, poultry and seafood
- If it takes more than 1 hour to get home, after purchasing groceries, have an ice chest to keep frozen and perishable foods cold

Food storage:

- Maintain refrigerator temperature at 40°F (5°C)
- Maintain freezer temperature at 0°F (-18°C)
- Do not crowd refrigerator and freezer, as this will not allow air to circulate.
- Eggs should be stored in cartons rather than on the door of the refrigerator, as the temperature on the door is warmer.
- In the refrigerator, raw foods should be stored below all cooked foods, to prevent cross-contamination.
- Do not store room temperature foods eg. potatoes and onions, below the kitchen sink, as these foods could get contaminated if the sink has leaks.
- Do not store room temperature foods close to chemicals and cleaning products.

Cleaning/ washing foods and food preparation areas:

- Prior to cooking, wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds
- Always wash hands before and after handling raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Secure hair before cooking and be sure to completely cover open cuts and sores on hands
- Sanitize countertops and sink with bleach and water solution before and after cooking a meal.
- Dishcloths should be washed in hot water at least once a week, as wet dishcloths harbor bacteria. The best alternative to dish cloths, are paper towels.
- Wash chopping boards with soap and water, using a scrub brush. It is also a good idea to periodically sanitize chopping boards in the dishwasher or with a bleach solution. Replace cutting boards periodically, as cracks and crevices form on the surface with frequent use. The cracks and crevices harbor harmful bacteria, which can cross-contaminate food.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw produce and breads and another one for meat, poultry and seafood.
- Wash the top of canned foods before opening the can, to prevent dirt from getting into the food.
- Food processors and grinders should be taken apart and cleaned using soap and water, after use.
- Do not put cooked meat, poultry or seafood in unwashed containers that held raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- Wash fruits and vegetables (even those with skins and rinds) thoroughly under running water before use. Do not use soap or any other detergent to wash fresh produce. If necessary, a small scrub brush can be used to remove surface dirt from fresh produce.
- Pre-cut or pre-washed produce in open bags should be washed before use. As a measure of precaution, wash the pre-washed produce in sealed bags, before use.
- It is good practice to periodically sanitize dishes and other kitchen wares. In case you do not have a dishwasher, a bleach solution works perfectly. The bleach solution can be prepared by adding one teaspoon (5 ml) of bleach to one quart (approximately 1 liter) of water. The same solution can be used to sanitize countertops too.

Cooking temperatures:

- Use a digital or a dial food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry and egg dishes are completely cooked. Insert the thermometer into the center of the food (or the thickest part of the food) and wait 30 seconds to acquire accurate measurement.

PRODUCT	TYPE	INTERNAL TEMPERATURE °F (°C)
Beef, Veal and Lamb	Fresh (medium rare)	145°F (63°C)
	Fresh (medium)	160°F (71°C)
	Fresh (well done)	170°F (77°C)
	Ground beef, veal and lamb	160°F (71°C)
Poultry	Whole poultry	180°F (82°C)
	Poultry thighs	180°F (82°C)
	Poultry breasts	170°F (77°C)
	Ground poultry	165°F (74°C)
	Stuffing	165°F (74°C)
Pork	Fresh (raw)	160°F (71°C)
	Ground pork	
Ham	Fresh (raw)	160°F (71°C)
	Pre-cooked (reheat)	140°F ()
Finfish	Fresh (raw)	145°F (63°C)
	Ground or flaked fish (eg. Fish cake)	155°F (68°C)
	Stuffed fish	165°F (74°C)
Seafood	Clams, oysters, mussels	Shells open during cooking
	Shrimp, lobster, crab	Flesh pearly and opaque
	Scallops	Milky white and firm
Eggs	Fresh	Until yolk and white are firm
	Egg dishes	160°F (71°C)

- All foods and casseroles should be reheated to an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C).
- Stuffing should be cooked separately from poultry, to 165°F (74°C) and can be stuffed at the time of presentation. If the stuffing is cooked inside the bird, in the course of cooking, juices from the poultry drain into the stuffing. In case the internal temperature of the stuffing does not reach 165°F (74°C) while cooking, some harmful bacteria may survive and cause infection when ingested.
- When cooking food in a microwave oven, cover the food, stir periodically and rotate for even cooking.

Marinating foods:

- Always marinate foods in the refrigerator
- Always discard marinade after use as it contains juices from raw meat, poultry or fish.
- If you want to use the marinade as a sauce, reserve a portion before adding it to the raw food.

Cooling foods:

- Foods should only be left at room temperature for a maximum of two hours
- If the amount of food is too large such as a casserole, divide it into batches, in shallow containers and put in a cold water bath to cool.

Defrosting/ Thawing foods:

- Never defrost foods at room temperature
- Three ways to defrost foods are;
 - in the refrigerator
 - seal in a plastic bag and immerse in cold water
 - in the microwave
- Foods thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately

Seafood:

- Always check local advisories about safety of fish/ shellfish caught by friends and family in your local lakes, rivers and coastal areas
- It is always best to cook all seafood thoroughly before consumption
- Some persons are at greater risk for foodborne illness and should not ingest raw or lightly cooked fish/ shellfish.

These susceptible groups include; pregnant women, young children, older adults, people with compromised immune systems, persons with decreased stomach acidity, persons with liver disease and diabetes.