

# Food Safety to Prevent Infectious Disease

There are four easy ways to keep food from going bad: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

**Clean:** Wash hands, utensils, and cutting boards before and after contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs.

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water. Wash your hands before touching food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or touching pets.
- Wash cutting boards, counters, dishes, and utensils with hot, soapy water. Do this after working with each food item.
- Use paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of the washing machine or in hot, soapy water.

**Separate:** Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods such as fruits and vegetables.

- Keep these foods away from each other in your shopping cart and in your fridge.
- Use a separate cutting board for raw meat products and ready-to-eat food such as fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Wash your hands after touching raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Wash cutting boards, surfaces, and utensils with hot, soapy water.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

**Cook:** Use a food thermometer—you can't tell if food is cooked safely by how it looks!

- Use a food thermometer which measures the internal temperature of cooked meat, poultry, and egg dishes, to make sure that the food is cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145°F.
- Whole poultry should reach 165°F.
- Cook ground beef to at least 160°F.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and whites are firm. Avoid using recipes in which eggs remain raw or partly cooked.
- Cooked fish should flake easily with a fork.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a boil when you reheat them. Leftovers should reach 165°F when reheated.
- Be careful if you use a microwave oven. Follow microwave instructions for foods to ensure adequate cooking. Make sure that food has no cold spots since cold spots let disease-causing pathogens live. Cover the food and stir it for even cooking. Rotate the dish once or twice while cooking.

**Chill:** Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful disease-causing pathogens.

- Set your fridge to 40°F or colder. The freezer should be kept at 0°F. Check the readings once a month with a fridge thermometer.
- Put all cooked and leftover food in the fridge or freezer within two hours.
- Never thaw food by simply taking it out of the fridge! There are three safe ways to thaw food:
  - In the refrigerator
  - Under cold running water
  - In the microwave according to the directions for the food
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow dishes with covers so they can cool quickly in the refrigerator.
- Don't pack the refrigerator too full. The cool air must flow freely to keep food safe.