An important part of healthy eating is keeping food safe. Every year, 76 million people are affected by **foodborne illnesses**. This type of illness is caused after eating foods with harmful bacteria. After eating food with harmful bacteria you can become sick anywhere from 20 minutes up until six weeks. There are four easy steps to follow to keep foods safe: **Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.**

### 1. Clean

Frequent cleaning can help keep bacteria from spreading. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen on your hands, countertops, cutting boards, and/or knives.

**Hands**
Wash your hands with warm water and soap for **20 seconds** before and after preparing or serving food.

**Surfaces**
Wash countertops, cutting boards, dishes, and utensils with hot soapy water after preparing each food item. Use paper towels to clean surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often with hot water and soap.

**Foods**
Rinse all fruits and vegetables under cold running water. Make sure to wash even those with skins and rinds that are not eaten, such as cantaloupes and watermelon. The knife you use to cut these fruits and vegetables can transfer bacteria on the outside to the inside part that you eat.

### 2. Separate

Careless handling of food may cause cross-contamination. This means harmful bacteria can spread from one food to another, such as when the juices of raw meat, poultry, or seafood touch ready-to-eat foods like salad.

**Tips to avoid cross-contamination:**
- When shopping, put raw meat, poultry, and seafood in their own plastic bags in the bottom of the cart.
- Store raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator and freezer.
- Use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood and a different one for ready-to-eat foods.
- Never put cooked food on a plate that had raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs on it.

### 3. Cook

If foods are not cooked to the correct temperature, bacteria can survive and may cause a foodborne illness.

- Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods.
- Use the chart on the back for correct cooking temperatures.
- If using a microwave:
  - Heat food in microwave-safe containers only, such as glass bowls or ceramic plates.
  - Cover food with a lid, paper towel, or wax paper.
  - Stir food often so it heats evenly.
4. Chill
Harmful bacteria grow quickly in the Danger Zone (between 40°F and 140°F). Using proper chilling techniques is extremely important to reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

- Refrigerate leftovers and takeout foods within 2 hours.
- Keep an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator and make sure it is at 40°F or below and the freezer is below 0°F.
- Put away meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and other perishables as soon as you get home from the grocery store.
- Never defrost food on the kitchen counter at room temperature! The safest way is to place frozen meat on a plate in the fridge below ready-to-eat foods.

Safe Storage Tips:
- Put leftovers in small, shallow containers for rapid cooling.
- Label and date all cooked foods.
- Use cooked leftovers within 3 to 4 days.

Cold Food Storage:
- An egg in its shell can last 3 - 5 weeks.
- Once opened, deli meat lasts 3 - 5 days.
- How long to freeze items:
  - Meat: 3 to 4 months
  - Fish: 3 to 6 months
  - Poultry: 6 to 9 months
  - Fruits & Vegetables: 8 to 12 months

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**Safe Cooking Temperatures**

Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods. The following chart shows the proper temperature for certain cooked foods.

**Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures**
- Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb: 160°F
- Turkey, Chicken: 165°F

**Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb**
- Medium Rare*: 145°F
- Medium: 160°F
- Well Done: 170°F

**Poultry**
- Whole Chicken & Turkey: 165°F
- Poultry (breasts, thighs): 165°F

**Fresh Pork**
- Medium: 160°F
- Well Done: 170°F

**Ham**
- Fresh (raw): 160°F
- Pre-cooked (to reheat): 140°F

**Eggs & Egg Dishes**
- Eggs: Cook until firm
- Egg Dishes: 160°F

**Seafood**
- Fin Fish: 145°F

**Leftovers & Casseroles**: 165°F

*Consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of food-borne illness.

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This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low incomes. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local DHS office, or call the URI SNAP-Ed nutrition program at 1-877-Food-URI (1-877-366-3874). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.