



Protect yourself from food poisoning

Food safety made easy

We all think our home as the least likely source of food poisoning, but according to the World Health Organisation, **more than 40% of food poisoning occurs in our homes.**

Food safety can be easily built into your daily life by remembering the 4 Cs – **Cross-contamination**, **Cleaning**, **Cooking** and **Chilling**. Follow these simple food safety tips.



Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination occurs when harmful bacteria such as *Campylobacter* are spread between food, packaging, hands, surfaces and equipment.

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate in the fridge.
- Wash and clean all utensils, chopping boards and surfaces with hot soapy water after every use.
- Always wash hands for at least 20 seconds, especially when preparing food.
- Don't wash raw chicken. The splashing water spreads the germs. Thorough cooking kills them all.



Cleaning

Good food safety means knowing where bacteria are likely to thrive and not giving them a chance to get comfortable.

- Regularly clean work surfaces with hot soapy water and a good scrub.
- Always wash chopping boards and kitchen utensils with hot soapy water after every use especially after handling raw meat, poultry, seafood or raw vegetables.
- Change and clean dishcloths, sponges and tea towels after 2 days. To clean, either boil them in water for 15 minutes or put them into the washing machine.



Food safety advice is important all year round whether cooking for yourself or friends and family. Remember under 5s, over 65s, pregnant women and those with an underlying medical condition are most at risk from food poisoning.



Cooking

All raw meats can carry harmful bacteria on the outside, so it is important to cook all meat properly to kill the bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

- Chicken, pork and any meat that is minced or skewered (such as burgers, sausages and kebabs) can contain bacteria throughout so they must be cooked all the way through.
- To check meat is cooked, cut into the thickest part and ensure that it is steaming hot with no pink meat visible and that the juices run clear.
- If you are cooking a large dish, check in a few places, because some parts of the dish may be less hot than others.



Chilling

Leftovers need to be handled and stored safely to avoid dangerous bacteria such as *Listeria* growing on the food in your fridge. *Listeria* is unusual in that it can grow at refrigerator temperature unlike most other bacteria.

- Cooked leftover food needs to be refrigerated within 2 hours.
- Keep your fridge temperature at 5°C or below.
- Don't put food in the fridge when it is still hot, because it could raise the temperature of the fridge and allow other foods to get too warm.
- Cover and chill raw meat and store at the bottom of the fridge so the raw juices cannot drip on other foods and contaminate them with food poisoning bacteria.



Frequently asked food safety questions

Can you defrost meat, cook it, then refreeze it?

Yes, but only if the meat has been thoroughly cooked after you have defrosted it. Remember to cool and freeze within 2 hours. Cooked food that has been frozen needs to be fully defrosted before you can reheat it. It can only be reheated once and should be piping hot.

I think my freezer has stopped working – is the food safe to eat?

- 24 hours or less - food is safe in the freezer if the door has been closed all that time.
- 24 hours or more - some foods resist thawing better than others, so check them all individually.

Can I defrost chicken on the kitchen counter?

- The safest way to defrost food is in the fridge. Allow at least 24 hours for every 2–2.5 kg (4–5 lbs).
- Make sure that poultry has thawed completely before cooking.
- Cooked food should be kept in your fridge for no longer than 3 days.

Can I defrost meat in the microwave?

We would recommend defrosting in the fridge. If defrosting food in the microwave, cook it and eat it straight away.

Can I eat food on the day of the *use by* date?

Yes, as long as it has been properly stored.

What's the difference between *use by* and *best before* dates?

Use by is a deadline while *best before* is a guideline.

How long is food safe in my freezer?

This not a food safety issue. Food stored in your freezer will be safe to eat, but the quality and taste may be affected the longer the food is stored in the freezer.

If in doubt, throw it out!

For more food safety information,
search **safe food**

