

Food & Facilities Licensing

Environmental Health

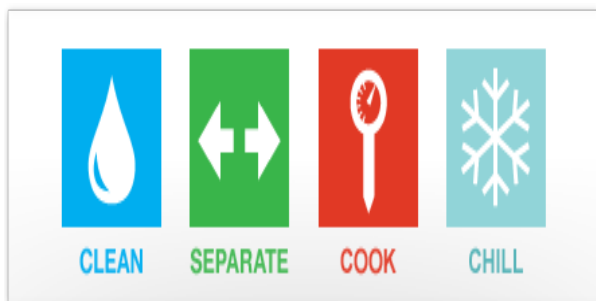
Health Care Facilities

Licensing Services

Food Safety

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food safety program, one in six Americans could get sick from poisoning this year alone! Food poisoning sends more than 100,000 individuals to the hospital each year.

Following four simple steps can help keep your family safe from food poisoning at home.



Clean--wash hands and surfaces often

Why does it matter? Illness-causing bacteria can live in many places around your kitchen, including your hands, utensils and cutting boards. Unless you wash your hands, utensils and surfaces the right way, you could spread bacteria to your food and to your family.

Follow these top tips to keep you and your family safe:

- Wash hands the right way--for 20 seconds with plain soap and running water. Washing your hands the right way can stop the spread of illness-causing bacteria.
- When should you wash your hands?
 - Before eating food.
 - Before, during and after preparing food.
 - Before and after caring for someone who is sick.
 - After handling uncooked eggs, or raw meat, poultry, seafood or their juices.
 - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
 - After touching an animal or animal waste.
 - After touching garbage.
 - After using the toilet.

- Wash surfaces and utensils after each use. Bacteria can be spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils and countertops.
- Wash fruits and veggies--but not meat, poultry or eggs! Did you know that even if you plan to peel fruits and veggies, it is important to wash them first because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside as you cut or peel them?

Separate--don't cross-contaminate

Why does it matter? Even after you have cleaned your hands and surfaces thoroughly, raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs can still spread illness-causing bacteria to ready-to-eat foods--unless you keep them separate.

Follow these tips to keep you and your family safe:

- Use separate cutting boards and plates for produce and for meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- Placing ready to eat food on a surface that held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs can spread bacteria and make you sick.
- Keep meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate at the grocery store.
- Make sure you aren't contaminating foods in your grocery bag by:
 - Separating raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your shopping cart.
 - At the checkout, place raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags to keep their juices from dripping on other foods.
- Keep meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from all other foods in the fridge. Bacteria can spread inside your refrigerator if the juices of raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs drip into ready-to-eat foods.

Cook--to the right temperature

Did you know that the bacteria that cause food poisoning multiply quickest in the "Danger Zone" between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit? And while many people think that they can tell when food is "done" simply by checking its color and texture, there is no way to be sure it's safe without following a few important but simple steps.

Follow these simple steps to keep you and your family safe:

- Use a food thermometer. Cooked food is only safe after it's been heated to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Color and texture alone won't tell you whether your food is done. Use a food thermometer to be sure.
- Keep food hot after cooking (at 140° F or above). The possibility of bacterial growth actually increases as food cools after cooking because the drop in temperature allows bacteria to thrive. You can keep your food above the safe temperature of 140°F by using a heat source like a chafing dish, warming tray or slow cooker.
- Microwave food thoroughly (to 165° F). To make sure harmful bacteria have been killed in your foods, it's important to microwave them to 165° or higher.
 - When you microwave, stir your food in the middle of heating.
 - If the food label says, "let stand for x minutes after cooking," don't skimp on the standing time. Letting your microwaved food sit for a few minutes actually helps your food cook more completely by

allowing colder areas of food time to absorb heat from hotter areas of food. That extra minute or two could mean the difference between a delicious meal and food poisoning.

- After waiting a few minutes, check the food with a food thermometer to make sure it is 165°F or above.

Chill--refrigerate promptly

Did you know that illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them? And if the temperature is 90°F or higher during the summer, cut that time down to one hour! By refrigerating foods promptly and properly, you can help keep you and your family safe from food poisoning at home.

Follow these tips to keep you and your family safe:

- Refrigerate perishable foods within two hours. Cold temperatures slow the growth of illness causing bacteria. It is important to chill food promptly and properly.
 - Pack your refrigerator with care. To properly chill food, cold air must be allowed to circulate in your fridge. It is important NOT to over-stuff your fridge.
 - Your refrigerator should be between 40°F and 32°F. Appliance thermometers help you know if the fridge is cold enough.
 - Get perishable foods into the fridge or freebee within two hours. In the summer months, cut this time down to one hour.
 - Store leftovers within two hours as well. By dividing leftovers into several clean, shallow containers, you'll help them to chill faster.
- Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter. Because bacteria can multiply rapidly at room temperature, thawing or marinating foods on the counter is one of the riskiest things you can do when preparing food.
 - Thaw in the refrigerator. This is the safest way to thaw meat, poultry and seafood. Simply take the food out of the freezer and place it on a plate or pan that will catch any juices that may leak. Normally, it should be ready to use the next day.
 - Thaw in cold water. For faster thawing, put frozen package in a watertight plastic bag and submerge it in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes. If you thaw this way, be sure to cook the food immediately.
 - Thaw in the microwave. Faster thawing can also be done in the microwave. Simply follow the instructions in your owner's manual. As with thawing in cold water, food thawed in the microwave should be cooked immediately.
 - Cook without thawing. If you don't have enough time to thaw food, remember it is safe to cook frozen food--but your cooking time will be approximately 50% longer than fully thawed meat or poultry.
- To marinate food safely, always marinate in the refrigerator.
- Know when to throw food out. You can't tell just by looking or smelling whether harmful bacteria has started growing in your leftovers or refrigerated foods. Be sure to throw food out before harmful bacteria grown by checking the USDA's Safe Storage Times chart.

Want to keep up to date on food safety recalls? Click [here](#) to see the USDA's food recall page. Information provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. See more information at foodsafety.gov.

Have a complaint about a Montgomery County food service facility? Click [here](#) to make a report.

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