

## **Rules for Safe Food Preparation**

### **1. Choose foods processed for safety**

While many foods, such as fruits and vegetables, are best in their natural state, others simply are not safe unless they have been processed. For example, always buy pasteurised as opposed to raw milk and, if you have the choice, select fresh or frozen poultry treated with ionising radiation. When shopping, keep in mind that food processing was invented to improve safety as well as to prolong shelf life. Certain foods eaten raw, such as lettuce, need thorough washing.

### **2. Cook food thoroughly**

Many raw foods, most notable poultry, meats, eggs and unpasteurised milk, may be contaminated with disease-causing organisms. Thorough cooking will kill the pathogens, but remember that the temperature of all parts of the food must reach at least 70 °C. If cooked chicken is still raw near the bone, put it back in the oven until it's done - all the way through. Frozen meat, fish, and poultry must be thoroughly thawed before cooking.

### **3. Eat Cooked foods immediately**

When cooked foods cool to room temperature, microbes begin to proliferate. The longer the wait, the greater the risk. To be on the safe side, eat cooked foods just as soon as they come off the heat.

### **4. Store cooked foods carefully**

If you must prepare foods in advance or want to keep leftovers, be sure to store them under either hot (near or above 60 °C) or cool (near or below 10 °C) conditions. This rule is of vital importance if you plan to store foods for more than four or five hours. Foods for infants should preferably not be stored at all. A common error, responsible for countless cases of foodborne disease, is putting too large a quantity of warm food in the refrigerator. In an overburdened refrigerator, cooked foods cannot cool to the core as quickly as they must. When the centre of food remains warm (above 10 °C) for too long, microbes thrive, quickly proliferating to disease causing levels.

### **5. Reheat cooked foods thoroughly**

This is your best protection against microbes that may have developed during storage (proper storage slows down microbial growth but does not kill the organisms). Once again, thorough reheating means that all parts of the food must reach at least 70 °C.

## **6. Avoid contact between raw foods and cooked foods**

Safely cooked food can become contaminated through even the slightest contact with raw food. This cross-contamination can be direct, as when raw poultry meat comes into contact with cooked foods. It can also be more subtle. For example, don't prepare a raw chicken and then use the same unwashed cutting board and knife to carve the cooked bird. Doing so can reintroduce the disease-causing organisms.

## **7. Wash hands repeatedly**

Wash hands thoroughly before you start preparing food and after every interruption - especially if you have been to the toilet. After preparing raw foods such as fish, meat, or poultry, wash again before you start handling other foods. And if you have an infection on your hand, be sure to bandage or cover it by wearing rubber gloves before preparing food. Remember, too, those household pets - dogs, cats and birds - often harbour dangerous pathogens that can pass from your hands into food.

## **8. Keep all kitchen surfaces meticulously clean**

Since foods are so easily contaminated, any surface used for food preparation must be kept absolutely clean. Think of every food scrap, crumb or spot as a potential reservoir of germs. Cloths that come into contact with dishes and utensils should be changed frequently and boiled before re-use. Separate cloths for cleaning the floors also require frequent washing.

## **9. Protect foods from insects, rodents, and other animals**

Animals frequently carry pathogenic microorganisms, which cause foodborne disease. Storing foods in closed containers is your best protection.

## **10. Use safe water**

Safe water is just as important for food preparation as for drinking. If you have any doubts about the water supply, boil water before adding it to food or making ice for drinks. Be especially careful with any water used to prepare an infant's meals and customers foods.