



Food Safety

Patient and Family Education

Why do I need to practice food safety?

Food may carry germs and molds that can make your family sick. Most cases of food poisoning are due to improper food handling. Food safety is very important when you prepare, serve and store foods at home.

How can I help prevent food-borne illness in the kitchen?

- **Washing hands well and often is the best way!** Be sure hand washing soap is always available at the sink:
 - Wash hands well (at least 15 seconds) with soap and warm running water **before** and **after** each step in food preparation.
 - Wash **before** eating and **after** using the toilet, sneezing, coughing, diapering and handling pets.
 - Use paper towels or a hot air blower for drying hands.
- Change dishcloths, sponges and dish towels often because germs grow on them.
- Cut raw meat, fish and poultry on a cutting board that is not used for anything else.
- After using a cutting board, wash it with hot, soapy water or put it in the dishwasher.
- When preparing cooked foods, use clean utensils (knives, plates, cutting board).
- Clean can openers, mixer beaters, blender blades and counter tops after each use.

What do I need to know when I go grocery shopping?

Take groceries home and store them **right away** – do not let them sit in the car or out on the counter.

- **DO buy:**
 - Frozen foods that feel solid
 - Cold foods that feel cold
- **DO NOT buy:**
 - Cracked or unrefrigerated eggs
 - Dented cans of food
 - Foods past their expiration date
 - Foods that look moldy or old

What should I know about using the microwave?

- Microwave cooking can leave cool spots in the food, where germs can grow.
- Stir food often during microwaving, and check to be sure that the food has been completely heated to at least 165 degrees.
- Turn over sandwiches during microwaving to make sure they are evenly heated.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

Food Safety, continued

What are some other tips for food safety?

Cold food storage tips

- Check the temperature of your freezer and refrigerator to make sure they are within normal range.
 - Freezer temperature should be 0 degrees F or below.
 - Refrigerator temperature should be 40 degrees F or below.
- Do not overstuff your refrigerator to allow cold air to move freely.
- Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood in a plastic bag, so juices will not drip on other foods. Freeze them if you are storing them longer than 2 days.
- Never leave perishable food out of the refrigerator for more than two hours.
- Do not leave egg, cream, and mayonnaise dishes unrefrigerated for more than one hour.
- Storing foods too long in the refrigerator increases the chance of foodborne illness. Cold storage times vary among different foods.
- “When in doubt, throw it out.”
- **Throw away:**
 - The entire package of food with mold including yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, fruit, vegetables, jelly, bread, and pastry.
 - Eggs with cracked shells.
 - Foods older than their "use by" dates.

Dry food storage tips

- Store dry food away from heat, moisture, and cleaning chemicals.
- Wash the outside of cans and jars before storing them and using them.
- Throw away any bulging, leaking or cracked cans of food.
- Do not use home-canned vegetables unless you are sure they were pressure-canned properly.
 - Seal packages to keep out bugs and mites.
- **Throw away:**
 - Foods older than their "use by" dates.
 - Any bulging, leaking, or cracked cans of food.

Food preparation tips

- Thaw frozen meat in the refrigerator. Place it in a dish to catch the drips or thaw in the microwave and cook right away.
- Cook meats well done; use a meat thermometer. Red meat should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 165° and poultry should be cooked to at least 180°.
- During cooking, do not taste and stir with the same spoon.
- Serve hot foods right away after cooking or hold them in a heated oven at 140° or higher.

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Food Safety, continued

Tips for leftovers

- Refrigerate or freeze prepared food and leftovers within 2 hours.
- Divide warm or hot foods up into small portions for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- Bring leftover soups, sauces and gravies to a rolling boil before serving.
- Store all foods in covered containers; label and date the food.

REMEMBER, ANYONE CAN BECOME A VICTIM OF FOOD POISONING!

You can read more about food safety -

- Food storage chart from the U. S. Department of Agriculture
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/f01chart.html>
- Food safety tips from the American Dietetic Association – www.homefoodsafety.org

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