

Food Safety at **Home**



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit

www.tbdhu.com

Handle with Care at Home!

Food Safety at Home

Whether you are an employee in a restaurant, a member of a local catering group or preparing food for your family, the way YOU handle food affects the health of those who eat it.

Foodborne illness occurs when food containing harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi are eaten. These organisms are called pathogens. Pathogens need food, warmth, moisture and time to grow and multiply before they can cause an illness. One hundred bacteria can become one million in just 3 1/2 hours at room temperature.

Danger Zone in the Kitchen

The temperature Danger Zone is between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). Bacteria grow best in this temperature range, so keep cold food cold and hot food hot.

What can you do to prevent foodborne illness?



Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to loosen germs. Be sure to clean around the fingernails and creases where germs build up. Dry hands with a paper towel or clean cloth towel. Wash them often, especially before preparing food and after sneezing, blowing your or a child's nose, using the washroom, handling raw food,

handling garbage or any other dirty item that may contaminate your hands.

Keep pets away from the food preparation area in your home. Be sure to wash your hands well after touching pets.

Take care when you're shopping

- Always buy pasteurized milk and dairy products and government inspected meat and poultry.
- Avoid buying dented, rusted or bulging cans. Bacteria can enter the food through the tiniest of holes or cracks.
- Beware of refrigerator display cases that are over-packed. It is hard to keep food temperatures at 4°C (40°F) or less under these conditions.
- Never buy foods that normally need to be kept cold, from unrefrigerated counters.
- Watch for cross-contamination at the meat counter. Is the same slicing machine used to slice cold cuts and raw meat? Is the blade sanitized between slicing raw and processed meats? Is there cross-contamination in the seafood display with raw fish and cooked shrimp near each other on the ice?
- At the check-out, be sure meat and poultry are packed separately to prevent juice from leaking.
- Use a cooler if you have a long drive home or won't be going straight home after shopping. Pack groceries in the passenger area rather than in the hot trunk.

Buy only Canada Grade A eggs with clean, uncracked shells.



Use before the "Best Before" date.

Keep eggs in the carton on the refrigerator shelf where it is colder than on the door.

Shop for meats, poultry, eggs and dairy products last so that they are in the Danger Zone for the shortest time possible.

Store foods properly

Refrigerate perishables as soon as possible. They should not be kept at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Cold air needs to circulate around the food, so don't over-pack the refrigerator.

**Maintain your refrigerator temperature at 4°C (40°F) or less.
Check it with a thermometer.**

Leave raw meat in its store wrapping and place in a bowl or on a plate on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator. Never let raw food or the juices from raw meats and poultry come in contact with prepared foods or fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw.

Thawing

The safest way to thaw foods is to put them in the refrigerator. Allow 12 to 15 hours per pound (26–33 hrs/kg) of meat or chicken and 5 hours per pound (10 hrs/kg) of turkey. Cook within 48 hours of thawing.

Placing frozen food in cold water is a good alternative to the refrigerator. Change the water frequently to ensure it stays cold. If using a microwave for thawing, be sure to cook the food right away.

Preparation

Reduce the chance of cross-contamination. Prepare raw meat



separately from other foods. Never put cooked meat on an unwashed plate or platter on which you carried raw meat. Use clean utensils for each food to be prepared. Never put a utensil back into a food if it has been used to taste the food. Never put a utensil in cooked food if it was used to stir raw meat or poultry.

Use smooth cutting boards made of wood or plastic.

They should be free of cracks and crevices where bacteria may collect. Discard any boards with cracks or deep gouges in them. Plastic cutting boards are often preferable as they are easier to clean and can be sanitized in the dishwasher. All cutting boards should be sanitized after being used for cutting raw meats, fish or poultry. If not going in the dishwasher, wash in hot soapy water and rinse in a mild bleach solution (see Clean-up).

Poultry

Never stuff poultry ahead of time. The stuffing for turkey or chicken is a perfect place for bacteria to grow – it is warm, moist and low in acid. If stuffing is made in advance, store it in a separate bowl in the refrigerator and stuff the poultry just before roasting.

Eggs

Because raw eggs contain bacteria, special precautions should be taken when serving eggs to young children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with a weakened immune system. These people should avoid eating foods with raw eggs. Pasteurized egg products can be substituted in recipes calling for raw eggs.

Bacteria can enter an egg through a crack. If an egg becomes cracked, be sure to use it in a dish that will be cooked thoroughly.

Fruits and Vegetables

- Wash fruits and vegetables with running water, rubbing gently to remove dirt and germs that live in the soil and may be transferred to plants. Do not use detergent because the fruits and vegetables can absorb it.
- Before rinsing leafy vegetables such as lettuce or cabbage, remove and discard the outer leaves.
- Don't put washed produce back in the original bag unless it too has been washed.
- Wash fruits and vegetables even if the skin or rind will not be eaten. A knife can spread bacteria from the outside to the inside during cutting.
- Homemade vegetable and herb mixtures stored in oil must be made with fresh ingredients, refrigerated and used within one week.



Cooking



Use a thermometer to check these temperatures. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the food and in the case of meat, away from fat, gristle and bone. Wash and sanitize the stem of the thermometer after every use.

Final Internal Cooking Temperatures

(Using A Probe Thermometer)

Temperatures must be maintained for a minimum of 15 seconds

| | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Poultry Whole poultry Individual pieces | 82°C 74°C | 180°F 165°F |
| Mixtures Containing poultry, egg, meat, fish or other hazardous food | 74°C | 165°F |
| Beef & Veal Hamburger, deboned and rolled roasts | 71°C | 160°F |
| Pork All products | 71°C | 160°F |
| Lamb Ground, deboned and rolled roasts | 71°C | 160°F |
| Fish All products | 70°C | 158°F |
| Eggs | 63°C | 145°F |

Cook ground meat and poultry until the meat is no longer pink **AND** the juices run clear.

Foods such as gravy, spaghetti sauce, lasagna and stew take a long time to become hot in the centre and are also difficult to cool quickly. Make several small pans rather than one large one. It is easier to heat them to high temperatures and to cool them as well.

When cooking for a large group, keep the time between cooking and serving food to a minimum. Keep hot food hot and cold food cold.

Leftovers

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of preparation in small, covered, shallow containers to speed cooling. Large pots of chili and soup can take hours or days to chill properly. Zipper type plastic bags allow food to cool quickly because they allow a large, flat surface to be exposed to refrigerated air. Leave space between containers to allow cooling air to circulate. Leftovers should be eaten within 4 days. Reheat leftovers to at least 74°C (165°F). Heat soups and gravies to a rolling boil. If leftovers are uneaten after being reheated, discard them.

Clean-up

Always use clean dishcloths. Change dishcloths after wiping up raw eggs or meat juices. Use a separate cloth for wiping the floor.

Wash dishes in hot soapy water, rinse the soap away and then sanitize in a mild bleach solution. Air drying dishes is more hygienic than drying with a dishtowel.

To make a bleach solution, mix 5 mL bleach with 1L water (1 tsp bleach to 34 oz water). If making in a spray bottle, mix a fresh solution every few days as bleach loses its effectiveness.

Bleach and water is an effective sanitizer that can also be used on counter tops and other work surfaces.

***Preventing foodborne illness is everyone's responsibility.
Take time to form safe habits in all aspects
of food handling.***

Definitions

Government inspected / government inspected source – the food and/or establishment has been inspected by an official government agency i.e. Thunder Bay District Health Unit, CFIA

Cleaning – the physical removal of dirt, soil and grease, typically carried out with soap/detergent, water and a scrubbing action

Probe (instant read) thermometer – a thermometer that can be easily inserted into foods to verify food preparation and storage temperatures

Sanitize (sanitized, sanitizing) – the reduction in the number of disease-causing micro-organisms, typically carried out with a chlorine and water solution (1 tsp bleach in 4 litres water)

Pathogen – illness causing bacteria, viruses or parasites

Foodborne illness – sickness caused by eating food that has been contaminated by pathogens

Cross-contamination – the transfer of pathogens from one place to another

For further information:

**Environmental Health Department
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
(807) 625-5930 or toll free at
1-888-294-6630, ext. 5930**



Adapted with permission from Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Home Economics Section.