

Food Safety Starts at Home: Simple Steps to Prevent Foodborne Illness



Be Well 2026

Why Food Safety Matters

- 1 in 6 Americans get sick from foodborne illness each year
- Most foodborne illness starts **at home**
- Many illnesses are preventable with simple habits
- Higher risk for older adults, young children, pregnant people, and those with chronic illness

What Is Foodborne Illness?

- Illness caused by bacteria, viruses, or toxins in food

Symptoms may include:

- Nausea, vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Stomach cramps

Symptoms can appear hours or days later

Most Common Foodborne Illnesses

- Norovirus
- Salmonella
- Campylobacter
- E. coli
- Listeria



Norovirus (Most Common Cause)

- Often spread by:
 - Poor handwashing
 - Contaminated surfaces
- Common foods:
 - Ready-to-eat foods
 - Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Prevention:
 - Wash hands thoroughly
 - Clean surfaces regularly

Salmonella & Campylobacter

Common sources:

- Raw or undercooked poultry
- Eggs
- Unpasteurized milk

Prevention:

- Cook poultry to 165°F
- Avoid cross-contamination
- Wash hands after handling raw meat



E. coli

- **Sources:**
- Undercooked ground beef
- Unwashed produce
- **Prevention:**
- Cook meats thoroughly
- Wash produce
- Keep refrigerator $\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$



Listeria

Sources:

- Deli meats
- Soft cheeses
- Refrigerated leftovers kept too long

Prevention:

- Cook meats thoroughly
- Wash produce
- Keep refrigerator $\leq 40^{\circ}\text{F}$



Special Focus – Rice and Food Safety

- Cooked rice can grow **Bacillus cereus**
- Risk increases when rice is:
 - Left at room temperature
 - Not refrigerated promptly

Safety tips:

Refrigerate rice within 1 hour

Store in shallow containers

reheat to steaming hot

Discard rice left out over 2 hours

Cutting Board Safety

- Raw meat juices can contaminate surfaces

- Use:

One board for raw meat

One board for fruits/vegetables

- Avoid deep cracks where bacteria hide

Cutting Board Care & Cleaning

- Wash with hot, soapy water after each use
- Sanitize periodically:
 - 1 tablespoon bleach per gallon of water
- Replace boards when heavily worn
- Wood boards:
 - Safe if cleaned properly
 - Let dry completely between uses

The Importance of Handwashing

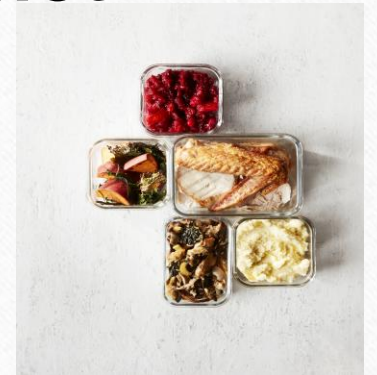
- Handwashing is the **#1 way** to prevent foodborne illness
- Wash hands:
 - Before food prep
 - After handling raw meat
 - After bathroom use
 - After touching pets or phones

How to Wash Hands Correctly

- Wet hands with clean water
- Use soap and scrub for **20 seconds**
- Clean:
 - Fingertips
 - Between fingers
 - Under nails
- Rinse and dry with a clean towel

Why Refrigerating Leftovers Matters

- Bacteria grow fastest at **40°F–140°F** (the “danger zone”)
- Leftovers left out too long can grow bacteria **you can’t see or smell**
- Some bacteria produce toxins that **reheating will not destroy**
- Refrigeration slows bacterial growth and keeps food safer longer



Meat Temperatures

Product	Minimum Internal Temperature and Rest Time
Beef, Pork, Veal and Lamb Steaks, Chops and Roasts	145 degrees F (62.8 degrees C) and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes
Ground Meats	160 degrees F (71.1 degrees C)
Ground Poultry	165 degrees F
Ham, Fresh or Smoked (Uncooked)	145 degrees F (62.8 degrees C) and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes
Fully Cooked Ham (to Reheat)	Reheat cooked hams packaged in USDA-inspected plants to 140 degrees F (60 degrees C) and all others to 165 degrees F (73.9 degrees C).
All Poultry (Breasts, Whole Bird, Legs, Thighs, Wings, Ground Poultry, Giblets and Stuffing)	165 degrees F (73.9 degrees C)
Eggs	160 degrees F (71.1 degrees C)
Fish & Shellfish	145 degrees F (62.8 degrees C)
Leftovers	165 degrees F (73.9 degrees C)
Casseroles	165 degrees F (73.9 degrees C)

Use a Meat Thermometer to be sure

- Temping

<https://youtu.be/9BR-jTcU24>

Safe Leftover Tips

- Refrigerate leftovers **within 2 hours**
- Within **1 hour** if room temperature is above 90°F
- Store food in **shallow containers** so it cools quickly
- Keep refrigerator temperature at **40°F or below**
- Eat refrigerated leftovers within **3–4 days**

Kitchen Safety Basics (Quick Tips)

- Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold
- Don't thaw food on the counter
- Wash hands after handling trash
- When in doubt—**throw it out**



Key Takeaways

- Most foodborne illness is preventable
- Pay attention to:
 - Handwashing
 - Cross-contamination
 - Proper storage (especially rice)
- Small habits = big health benefits

Keeping a Clean Scene

- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=429111508489320>

To get Be Well Rewards

Click [HERE](#)

Resources

- [Estimates: Burden of Foodborne Illness in the United States](#) (CDC)
- [Preventing Food Poisoning](#) (CDC)
- [Bacillus Cereus](#) (Cleveland Clinic)
- [Danger Zone](#) (USDA)
- [About Handwashing](#) (CDC)
- [Food Safety at Home](#) (FDA)

