

When In Doubt, Throw It Out

Never taste food that you think may be spoiled. If you are uncertain as to whether or not a food is still safe to eat, do not eat it.

Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold

If a food is cooked and put out to serve, make sure that you keep the food hot if it is not going to be eaten right away. If you are going to cool the food in the refrigerator, be sure to cool it quickly in a shallow container. Perishable food should never be kept at temperatures between 40 F and 140 F for more than two hours. Bacteria can grow well at these temperatures and may grow to levels that could cause illness.

Cold salads, lunchmeats, dairy products and other foods that require refrigeration should always be kept cold (below 40 F). If they are allowed to warm up, bacteria may be able to grow to dangerous levels.

For more information:

N.C. Division of Environmental Health
Food Protection Branch
1632 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1632
Phone: (919) 733-2905
Fax: (919) 715-4739
www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/ehs/dfp.htm

N.C. Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Food and Drug Protection Division
1070 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1070
Phone: (919) 733-7366
FAX: (919) 733-6801
www.ncagr.gov/fooddrug/foodsafety/index.htm

You can also contact the
local health department for
more information about food safety.

6 things to know about Food Safety



Every year, millions of people may experience one or more episodes of food-borne illness, without ever knowing that it was food that caused their illness. Generally, these illnesses are preventable if safe food-handling practices are followed. Below are six things you need to know about basic food safety. Make sure that you and your family aren't victims of preventable food-borne illness!

Wash Your Hands

Washing your hands is the most effective way of preventing the spread of communicable disease. Wash your hands after using the toilet, handling raw meat and poultry, after sneezing or coughing, after touching animals, and after you touch your hair, face or body. Basic sanitary practices will go a long way to prevent the spread of diseases.

The entire process of washing your hands should take only 20 seconds. First, wet your hands with warm running water as hot as you can comfortably stand it. Then, apply soap. Vigorously scrub hands and arms for at least 10 to 15 seconds. Pay close attention to finger-nails and cuticles. Rinse thoroughly under running water, and dry hands and arms with a single-use paper towel or hand dryer.

Wash Fruits and Vegetables

Eating contaminated produce can lead to food-borne illness, which can cause serious infections. Only purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. Bag and store fresh fruits and vegetables separately from meat, poultry and seafood products.

When preparing produce, always wash your hands before and after preparation. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas

on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating. All produce should be thoroughly washed with water before eating. Fruit with tough skin, such as melons, should be scrubbed with a soft brush and water. Dry produce with a clean cloth towel or a paper towel.

Separate for Safety

Some foods that come in contact with other types of foods can cause cross-contamination, meaning that you can get sick. The best advice: separate items for safety and prevention of cross-contamination.

Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods, such as raw meat, poultry or seafood, and from utensils used for those products. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat, poultry or seafood products. If using plastic or other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use.

Food Allergies are Common

Each year, millions of Americans have allergic reactions to food. Although most food allergies cause relatively mild and minor symptoms, some food allergies can cause severe reactions, and may even be life-threatening.

Did you know...?

The eight most common food allergies that cause 90 percent of all allergic reactions are:

- Milk
- Fish
- Tree Nuts
- Soybeans
- Eggs
- Wheat
- Peanuts
- Shrimp, lobster, crab

The eight foods above, and any ingredient that contains protein derived from one or more of them, are deemed 'major food allergens' by the law.

The appearance of adverse symptoms after eating food may be a sign of a food allergy. The food(s) that caused these symptoms should be avoided, and the affected person should contact a doctor or health care provider.

Symptoms of allergic reactions include:

- Usually appears within minutes to hours after a person eats the offending food.
- Tingling in the mouth
- Swelling of the tongue
- Difficulty breathing
- Hives
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea
- Drop in blood pressure
- Loss of consciousness
- Death

What should you do if someone displays these symptoms in your home?

- Call 911
- Ask them if they carry an Epi-Pen. Help them locate it and use it.
- Do not cancel the ambulance. An allergic reaction generally requires more than an administration of epinephrine.