



food safety at home

While surveys show that most people feel confident about food safety in their home, millions suffer from food-borne illnesses each year. Being savvy at food safety is important for everybody, but especially for pregnant women, children, people who have a compromised immune system, and seniors.

clean, separate, cook, chill

The following four steps will help you and your family to avoid getting sick from the food you eat.

1. Wash your hands properly before preparing food. Use soap and running water for 20 seconds and then dry your hands with a clean hand towel for 20 seconds.

2. Prevent cross-contamination from one food product to another, from equipment to food, and from people to food. Store raw foods separately from those that are cooked or ready to eat, and always keep utensils, surfaces, and equipment scrupulously clean to avoid contamination with bacteria and viruses.

3. If you eat meat, cook it thoroughly until there are no longer pink spots inside and the juices run clear.

4. Avoid storing food between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit (5 to 60 degrees Celsius)—what I call the “danger zone” temperature range—in which bacteria grow most rapidly. Bacteria can double in number in as

little as 20 minutes! If food is out of the refrigerator and in the danger zone temperature for more than two hours, food poisoning bacteria can begin to grow. Chill any hot food that you won't be using immediately as soon as it stops steaming and you can hold the dish without burning yourself. It doesn't need to get cold first. A good general rule for food storage is to keep food cold unless you're going to use it later in the day, in which case you should keep it hot. Don't let it cool and sit for several hours.

If you have stored food correctly after cooking it, use your sense of sight and smell for a basic appraisal of the contents. The best temperature for reheating is 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Use refrigerated leftovers within three to five days, and when in doubt, throw it out!

For more information, fact sheets, videos, helpful links, and advice regarding specific occasions, check out: www.foodsafety.asn.au; www.ific.org; www.fda.gov.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See the latest at <http://www.sueradd.com>.