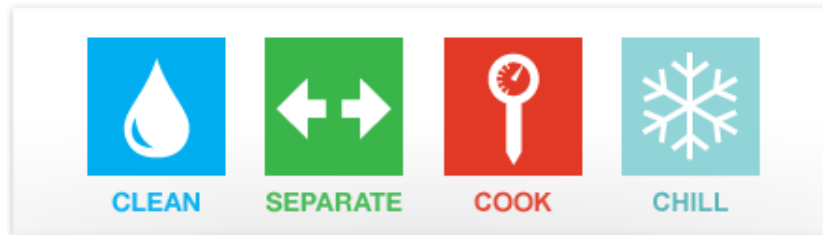

Food Safety: Check Your Steps



Step 1: Clean

Wash hands and surfaces often



Wash hands the right way—for 20 seconds with soap and running water.

Here's how to do it:

Wet your hands with warm or cold running water and apply soap.

- Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub them well. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails. Bacteria can hide out here too!
- Continue rubbing hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum “Happy Birthday” from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry.

Always wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food, and before eating food. Wash your hands any time you might have gotten dirt or germs on them.



Wash surfaces and utensils after each use.

Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next item.



Wash fruits and veggies—but not meat, poultry, or eggs!

Cut away damaged or bruised areas, then rinse produce under running water. Scrub firm produce with a produce brush. Dry produce with a clean paper or cloth towel.

Step 2: Separate

Don't cross-contaminate



Use separate cutting boards and plates for produce and for meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs.

Thoroughly wash plates, utensils, and cutting boards that held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.



Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods at the grocery.

Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your shopping cart. Place raw meat, poultry, and seafood in plastic bags to contain the juices.



Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods in the fridge.

Place raw meat, poultry and seafood in containers or sealed bags. Freeze meats if you're not planning to use them within a few days.

Step 3: Cook

Cook to the right temperature

Did you know that the bacteria that cause food poisoning multiply quickest in the “**Danger Zone**” between 40° and 140° Fahrenheit?



Use a food thermometer.

Color and texture alone won't tell you whether your food is done. Instead, use a food thermometer to be sure. Follow the [Minimum Cooking Temperatures Chart*](#) to be sure it's reached a safe temperature. Allow the food to rest if needed.



Keep food hot after cooking (at 140 °F or above).

You can keep your food above the safe temperature of 140 °F by using a heat source like a chafing dish, warming tray, or slow cooker.



Microwave food thoroughly (to 165 °F).

Stir foods in the middle of heating. Let the food stand for 1-2 minutes to allow the foods to cook thoroughly. Check the food with a food thermometer to make sure it reaches 165 °F or above.

Step 4: Chill

Refrigerate promptly



Refrigerate perishable foods within two hours.

Your fridge should be between 40 °F and 32 °F, and your freezer should be 0 °F or below. Be sure not to over-stuff your fridge to allow cold air to circulate. Divide leftovers into shallow containers so they will chill faster.



Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter.

- **Thaw in the refrigerator.** This is the safest way to thaw meat, poultry, and seafood. Place the food on a plate to catch any juices that may leak.
- **Thaw in cold water.** For faster thawing, you can put the frozen package in a watertight plastic bag and submerge it in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes.
- **Thaw in the microwave.** Follow instructions in your owner's manual for thawing.
- **Cook without thawing.** If you don't have enough time to thaw food, just remember, it is safe to cook foods from a frozen state—but your cooking time will be longer.



Know when to throw food out.

Be sure you throw food out before harmful bacteria grow by checking our [Safe Storage Times chart](#). *

Information adapted from www.foodsafety.gov *

(*You are now leaving the Department of Veterans Affairs Web Site)

Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)	Rest Time
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160	None
	Turkey, Chicken	165	None
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	Steaks, roasts, chops	145	3 minutes
Poultry	Chicken & Turkey, whole	165	None
	Poultry breasts, roasts	165	None
	Poultry thighs, legs, wings	165	None
	Duck & Goose	165	None
	Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165	None
Pork and Ham	Fresh pork	145	3 minutes
	Fresh ham (raw)	145	3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	140	None
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm	None
	Egg dishes	160	None
Leftovers & Casseroles	Leftovers	165	None
	Casseroles	165	None
Seafood	Fin Fish	145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.	None
	Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque.	None
	Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking.	None
	Scallops	Cook until flesh is milky white or opaque and firm.	None

Storage Times for the Refrigerator and Freezer

Category	Food	Refrigerator (40 °F or below)	Freezer (0 °F or below) (Quality purposes only)
Salads	Egg, chicken, ham, tuna & macaroni salads	3 to 5 days	Does not freeze well
Hot dogs	opened package	1 week	1 to 2 months
	unopened package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
Luncheon meat	opened package or deli sliced	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
	unopened package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
Bacon & Sausage	Bacon	7 days	1 month
	Sausage, raw — from chicken, turkey, pork, beef	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
Hamburger & Other Ground Meats	Hamburger, ground beef, turkey, veal, pork, lamb, & mixtures of them	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb & Pork	Steaks	3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months
	Chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months
	Roasts	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
Fresh Poultry	Chicken or turkey, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
	Chicken or turkey, pieces	1 to 2 days	9 months
Soups & Stews	Vegetable or meat added	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Leftovers	Cooked meat or poultry	3 to 4 days	2 to 6 months
	Chicken nuggets or patties	3 to 4 days	1 to 3 months
	Pizza	3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months
Eggs	Raw eggs in shell	3 to 5 weeks	Beat yolks and whites together; then freeze.