



Canadian  
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## Food safety at home

If food isn't handled, prepared or stored properly, it can become spoiled with germs. You won't always be able to tell from the taste or smell.

These germs can cause stomach aches, diarrhea or vomiting, or fever. Some germs can cause more serious problems such as kidney failure, blood infection or even paralysis. Babies and young children, older people and people with weak immune systems are most at risk if food is spoiled.

### How do germs get into food?

Canada's food supply is one of the safest in the world. Still, infections related to food do happen. Here's how:

- Food from animal sources (such as meat, chicken) can contain germs from these animals.
- Vegetables and fruits can pick up germs from the soil or during harvesting.
- Germs can also get onto food while it is handled, processed, stored or transported.

Usually, foods other than raw meats, poultry, eggs and unpasteurized milk products don't have enough germs to make you sick. Pasteurized foods have been through a process that kills germs without making the food less nutritious.

Most germs grow very slowly in the refrigerator, but faster at room temperature (when you leave meat out on the counter). At home, germs that may be on your food can grow to high levels if the food is not stored, handled and cooked properly.

The government will issue a warning when a food item is making people sick. Health Canada has food warnings at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/advisories-avis/>. You will also learn about this from the radio, television, the Internet and newspapers.

### How can I keep my family safe?

- **Choose safe foods for your child.**
  - Avoid unpasteurized milk and cheese products, and fruit or vegetable juices, unless they were

prepared from fresh fruit or vegetables that were washed just before serving. The label will say if the milk and juices that you buy are pasteurized.

- Properly rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, especially if they are to be eaten raw. Lettuce, spinach and other salad greens need careful attention. Young children should avoid eating raw or undercooked alfalfa, mung beans or other sprouts because the seeds used for sprouting may have germs.
- Children younger than one year of age should not eat honey. Honey may contain inactive forms of a germ that causes an illness called infantile botulism in young children. It can be dangerous to infants, but not to older children and adults. Pasteurization does not remove these germs and they are not affected by how you store honey.
- **Separate raw foods from cooked foods.**
  - Store meat, poultry, fish or seafood in leak-proof containers in the fridge, so that juices don't spill onto other foods.
  - Keep raw meats, poultry, fish and seafood away from cooked food, fresh fruits and vegetables. Wash hands, utensils, chopping boards and work surfaces carefully after handling raw meats, and before using the same items to prepare raw vegetables, salads, sandwiches or other foods.
  - When barbecuing, do not place cooked meats back on the plate that held raw meats.
- **Wash your hands.**
  - Wash your hands carefully with soap and water before you prepare or handle food. Also wash hands after handling raw meat, poultry or seafood.
  - If you have to stop for any reason while you are preparing food – especially to use the toilet,

## Information for parents and caregivers

change a diaper or touch a pet – wash your hands before going back to the food.

- **Cook meats – including hot dogs and sausages, poultry and seafood – and eggs thoroughly.**

- Raw meat is often contaminated with harmful germs. Cooking meat until it is steaming hot will destroy any dangerous germs.
- It is very important to cook ground beef and other meat patties all the way through. The meat should be brown at the centre, not pink or red. The juices should be clear or brown.
- Cook meat all the way through when barbecuing. Undercooked ground meats can cause ‘hamburger disease’ – a serious infection that can cause damage to the intestines and the kidneys.
- Chicken should also be well-cooked, not pink or red, and not raw near the bones. Undercooked chicken and eggs can cause a serious form of diarrhea.

- **Eat foods soon after they are cooked.**

- Keep hot foods hot, at 60°C (140°F) or above.
- Keep cold foods cold, at 4°C (40°F) or below.
- Don't let foods cool to room temperature. If serving later, refrigerate right away.

- **Store cooked foods appropriately.**

- For foods cooked in advance, store above 60°C (140°F) or rapidly cool and store below 4°C (40°F) to avoid growth of any germs that may have remained.
- Store leftovers right away in the fridge or freezer.

- Eat cream-filled pastries, potato, egg or other salads with creamy dressings immediately, or store right away in the fridge.
- Make sure your fridge is set at a temperature of 4°C (40°F) or below.

- **Reheat cooked foods adequately.**

- When serving heated leftovers, reheat the food all the way through.

- **Keep your kitchen clean.**

- Clean all dishes, utensils, cutting boards and counters that are in contact with foods before and after each use. Use hot water.

- **Protect your food.**

- Insects, rodents and other animals, including pets, can carry germs. Store nonperishable foods (foods that don't need to be refrigerated) in closed containers in a safe place.

- **Use safe water.**

- Always use safe water when preparing food. If in doubt about water quality, boil it.

### For more information

- Foodborne infections, a paediatric infectious disease note by the Canadian Paediatric Society is available at <<http://www.cps.ca/English/Publications/InfectiousDiseases.htm>>
- Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education <<http://www.canfightbac.org/en/>>
- Food Safety Network <[www.foodsafetynetwork.ca](http://www.foodsafetynetwork.ca)>
- For a complete table on food infections and how to avoid them, please visit <[www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)>

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