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Home Food Safety Myths and Facts for Consumers

The Partnership for Food Safety Education
2014
Home Food Safety Mythbusters reveal facts behind common myths about food handling practices at home.

For more Home Food Safety Mythbusters go to www.fightbac.org

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Myth #1

“Freezing foods kills harmful bacteria that can cause food poisoning.”
Fact #1

Although freezing food does prevent bacteria from multiplying, the only way to kill bacteria is to cook food to the proper temperature.
Remember

• When food is thawed, bacteria can still be present
• Always use a food thermometer to measure the temperature of cooked foods
Myth#2

“Locally grown, organic foods will never give me food poisoning.”

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Fact #2

Any food can become unsafe with bacteria if it is not handled or stored properly.
Remember

• In order to reduce your risk of contracting food poisoning, make sure you follow the four steps of keeping food safe: clean, separate, cook and chill.
Myth #3

“I eat a vegetarian diet, so I don’t have to worry about food poisoning.”
Fact #3

Fruits and vegetables may carry a risk of foodborne illness just like any other food.
Remember

• Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten
• Do not use soap, bleach, or detergent to wash produce
• Packaged fruits or vegetables that are labeled “ready-to-eat” or “washed” need not be re-washed
Myth #4

“Plastic or glass cutting boards don’t hold harmful bacteria on their surfaces like wooden cutting boards do.”
Fact #4

Every type of cutting board needs to be washed and sanitized after each use.

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Remember

- Plastic, glass, granite, and hardwood cutting boards are dishwasher safe
- Wooden cutting boards do not hold up well in the dishwasher and should be hand-washed
- Cutting boards should be discarded after becoming excessively worn or developing hard-to-clean grooves
Myth #5

“If I microwave the food, the microwaves kill the bacteria so the food is safe.”
Microwaves are *not* what kill bacteria- it’s the *heat* generated by the microwaves that kills bacteria in foods. Food needs to be heated to a safe internal temperature.
Remember

- Read and follow package cooking instructions
- Know when to use a microwave or conventional oven
- Keep the heat on! Always use a food thermometer to ensure a safe internal temperature
Myth #6

“Of course I wash all the bagged lettuce and greens- I could get sick if I don’t.”
Fact #6

While it is important to wash most fresh fruits and veggies, packaged greens labeled “ready-to-eat”, “washed” or “triple washed” do NOT need to be washed at home.
Remember

Pre-washed greens –
LET US avoid rewashing to reduce risk of cross-contamination!

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Myth #7

“I don’t need to use a food thermometer. I can tell when my food is cooked by looking at it or checking the temperature with my finger.”
The only sure way to know food is safely cooked is to check the temperature with a food thermometer and confirm it has reached a safe internal temperature.
Remember

No matter how hot food may feel on the outside, bacteria can still be chillin’ on the inside!

Use a food thermometer!

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Myth #8:

“I can’t re-freeze foods after I have thawed them. I have to cook them or throw them away.”
Fact #8: If raw foods such as meat, poultry, egg products and seafood have been thawed in the refrigerator, then they may be safely re-frozen without cooking for later use.
Remember

Thaw food in the refrigerator to protect your frozen assets
Myth #9:

“Putting chicken in a colander and rinsing it with water will remove bacteria like salmonella.”
Fact #9: Rinsing poultry in a colander will not remove bacteria. In fact, it can spread raw juices around your sink, onto your countertops, and onto ready-to-eat foods.
Remember

- Bacteria in raw meat and poultry can only be killed when cooked to a safe internal temperature, which for poultry is 165 °F, as measured with a food thermometer.
- Save yourself the messiness of rinsing raw poultry.
- It is not a safety step and can cause cross-contamination.
Myth #10:

“My kids only eat pre-packaged fruits and veggies for snacks because those snacks don’t need to be washed before they eat them.”
Fact #10:

Read your way to food safety! Just because produce is wrapped, it doesn’t always mean it’s ready to eat as is. Read the label of your product to make sure it says: “ready-to-eat,” “washed” or “triple washed.” If it does, you’re good to go! If it doesn’t, wash your hands, then rinse the fruits or vegetables under running tap water.
Remember

• Always wash hands before and after handling food

• Scrub firm items, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush

• Dry with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to further reduce germs that may be present
So remember...
Foods taste extra good, when you cook them like you should!
Organic and conventional foods are both great, as long as you clean, cook, chill and separate!
Always wash hands **before** and **after** handling food!
Find many more home food safety mythbusters

www.fightbac.org
The Partnership for Food Safety Education delivers trusted, science-based behavioral health messaging and a network of resources that support consumers in their efforts to reduce risk of foodborne infection. For more information, please visit our website:

www.fightbac.org