



Consumers Can Fight BAC!™

Consumers can prevent most cases of food-related illness.

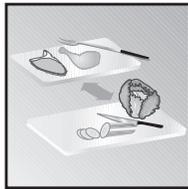
Remember:

- Bacteria (germs) are found naturally on all raw food products.
- Harmful bacteria can be transferred from one food to another, from food to people, and from people to food.
- Bacteria can grow rapidly at room temperature.
- Cold temperatures can slow or stop the growth of harmful bacteria in food.
- Food-related illness can produce symptoms from mild to very serious. Illness can occur from 30 minutes to two weeks after eating food that contains harmful bacteria.

Safe food handling has four key principles:



Wash hands and surfaces often. Wash hands in hot, soapy water before preparing food. Always wash hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets. Bacteria can live in kitchen towels, sponges, and cloths. Wash them often.



Separate foods to prevent cross-contamination.

For example, wash your hands, cutting board, and knife in hot, soapy water after cutting up meat and before dicing salad ingredients. Put packages of raw meat, poultry, or fish on a plate before refrigerating so their juices won't drip on other food. When grilling, don't put the grilled meat on the same plate that held the raw meat, unless you wash it thoroughly first.



Cook foods thoroughly to proper temperatures.

Color is not the best indicator for doneness. Use a thermometer to make sure food is cooked all the way through. Cook red meat to 160°F. Cook poultry to 180°F. Poultry juices run clear. Fish flakes with a fork. Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm, not runny. Scramble eggs to a firm texture. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.



Refrigerate foods promptly.

Never leave perishable food out of the refrigerator more than 2 hours! Divide large amounts into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Don't pack the refrigerator—cool air must circulate to keep food safe. To help control bacteria, keep your refrigerator as cold as possible without freezing milk or lettuce—generally 40°F. Check the temperature with an appliance thermometer (available at variety or hardware stores). Freeze fresh meat, poultry, or fish immediately if you can't use it within a few days. Keep freezer units at 0°F.

Wash your hands to stop germs!



- Remember all the things hands do: clap, make clay figures, build sand castles, pet animals, carry food to your mouth. Hands are very busy and must always be washed with soap and water before handling food.

- Dirt and germs can hide in the lines, cracks, and wrinkles of your hands. You might see dirt, but you won't see germs—they're too small.

- Germs live everywhere. Their favorite hangouts are your hair, under your fingernails, and in the small folds of your skin. Most of these germs won't hurt you. But germs also come from the world around you, and some of these can make you sick.

Do you know where your last cold came from? Scientists believe most people get colds and other illnesses by touching something a sick person touched.

So next time, don't just look at those hands—wash them! Follow these handwashing tips:

Wash your hands often.

Lather up with soap and warm water for 10 to 20 seconds.

Don't forget your fingernails. A good nail brush does the best job there.

Rinse well in warm water.

Questions? Contact:

Iowa State University
Extension Answer Line:
1-800-262-3804
TDD 1-800-854-1658

ISU Extension Food Safety
Project:
[www.extension.iastate.edu/
foodsafety/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety/)

USDA's Meat and Poultry
Hotline: 1-800-535-4555

FDA's Food Information/
Seafood Hotline: 1-800-332-4010

Partnership for Food Safety
Education Web Site:
www.fightbac.org

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... and justice for all

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