

## Safe Food Handling and Preparation



### Highlights

Food poisoning is common and can have varying symptoms from mild to severe. High-risk foods can cause serious issues, especially during pregnancy. Proper shopping, handling, and cooking of food at home are essential for safety. Always consider food allergies when preparing food for children and others. Stay informed about food recalls and safety updates.

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### Foodborne Illness

It is important to practice safe handling and preparation of food. This is

especially true when you are pregnant or have children. It is good to know the risks and how to minimise them.

Food poisoning is a common issue. Symptoms range from diarrhoea and vomiting to more serious conditions. Some bacteria and viruses and their toxins can cause food poisoning. It is important to take care with all food. Foods that smell off, are slimy, or have gone mouldy should not be eaten.

Some foods that cause food poisoning can appear normal, so it is important to prevent contamination.

Some foods are considered high-risk for developing food poisoning. These foods should be avoided if you are pregnant. They include:

Fresh bean sprouts, other preprepared salad goods that aren't washed before eating

Hummus and tahini

Pâté

Cold chicken or turkey

Pre-packaged salads

Pre-prepared sandwiches

Processed deli meats

Raw meat

Raw dairy products and foods made from these (such as goats' cheese)

Raw eggs

Raw seafood

Soft serve ice cream

Stuffing (from roast chicken or poultry)

Sushi

These foods can cause a severe type of food poisoning that may impact pregnancy.

Salmonella, which can be caught by eating raw eggs and uncooked meat, can in rare cases cause miscarriage.

Listeriosis can be avoided by eating fresh, well-washed foods. Listeria can cause miscarriage, premature labour, or stillbirth.

Toxoplasmosis can come from eating unwashed produce that may have been in contact with cat faeces. This can cause blindness or brain damage in an unborn baby.

Even after childbirth, some foods may require extra care during storage, preparation, and handling.

Seafood contains nutrients that are important for a child's development. However, it can contain mercury, which is harmful. Monitor seafood intake during pregnancy and for children under 6 years old.

Safely include fish as an important part of a balanced diet:

OR Eat 1 serve per fortnight of these, and no other fish: Shark (Flake) or Billfish (Broadbill, Swordfish, and Marlin)

Eat 2-3 serves per week of any fish and seafood not listed below

OR Eat 1 serve per week of these, and no other fish: Catfish or Orange Roughy (Deep Sea Perch)

### **Safe Food Shopping Tips**

When shopping for food, collect chilled and frozen foods last.

Bring an insulated container for products such as:

Meat

Dairy products

Chilled and frozen foods

Put cold foods into your fridge immediately. Your fridge temperature should be 4°C or less.

Put raw meat on the lowest shelf in your fridge so that the juices don't drip onto other foods.

### **Home Food Handling Tips**

## **Preparing Food**

Before preparing food, wash your hands with soap and water. Also, wash your hands before eating. Always wash your hands after changing a nappy or blowing your child's nose.

Wash fruit or vegetables well with water using clean hands. If you are washing produce in a sink or container, make sure it is also clean.

If there is any concern about the safety of the water, use bottled water. This includes for brushing your teeth and making ice. If bottled water is not available, you can boil water for 5 minutes or use chlorine-based tablets to treat the water.

Keep your utensils clean. Wash benches, dishcloths, chopping boards, and kitchen utensils with soap and water. Separate raw and cooked food. Use different cutting boards and knives for both.

Avoid defrosting meat at room temperature. Instead, defrost chicken or meat overnight in the fridge. If you're in a hurry, thaw meat in a microwave.

## **Cooking**

Heat kills most bacteria, so make sure you cook foods thoroughly, especially high-risk foods including:

- Chicken
- Pork
- Sausages
- Turkey

When reheating foods, warm them to at least 60°C, and they should be steaming hot.

When barbecuing, carry cooked meat to the table on a clean plate.

If any utensil has been in contact with raw meat, wash it well and keep it away

from cooked food to prevent contamination.

## **Storing Food**

Keep hot foods hot. Store cold foods in your fridge.

If you have leftover food, don't leave it at room temperature. Cool the food quickly and put it into your fridge.

Cooked rice should be placed in your fridge as soon as it has stopped steaming. Keep it in an airtight container in your fridge. Eat within three days of cooking. Improperly stored cooked rice can cause food poisoning.

Store foods that contain raw eggs or milk in your fridge.

Thawed meat can be re-frozen if it was defrosted in the fridge. Ensure it is cooked properly when thawed for the second time.

## **Eating Out Safely**

Be cautious when eating out. When you go on a picnic, carry your food in an insulated container with an ice pack.

Choose food stores that appear clean. Avoid smorgasbord venues. Also, avoid food items that are not stored appropriately, e.g., hot food must be hot when purchased.

## **Allergy Risks in Food**

Think about potential allergies when preparing food for your child and their friends. Common foods that cause allergies include:

Eggs

Fish and shellfish

Peanuts and tree nuts

Milk

Sesame seeds

Soy

Wheat

Introduce allergy foods to your child's diet when they are 6 months old.  
Introduce allergy foods one at a time.

## **School Lunches**

When preparing your child's lunch for school, remember food safety.

Lunches containing meat, egg, fish, chicken, or soft cheese must be kept cool.  
A plastic bottle of frozen water in the lunchbox helps.

Inform your child's school if they have a food allergy. Find out from the school if any foods are banned in school lunches, e.g., nuts and eggs.

## **Learning About Food Safety and Recalls**

Look for consumer information on nutrition, additives, and food safety tips.

Stay informed about food recalls through trusted sources. You can subscribe to email newsletters or follow food safety authorities on social media for the latest updates.

## **Tools and Assistance**

To learn more about food safety and prevent foodborne illness, you can access various tools and assistance services:

**Food Safety Websites:** Visit government health departments and reputable organizations for up-to-date food safety guidelines.

**Food Recall Alerts:** Subscribe to receive notifications about food recalls and safety warnings.

**Mobile Apps:** Use mobile apps for food safety tips, storage guidelines, and to track food recalls.

**Support Groups:** Join communities or support groups for specific concerns like food allergies or pregnancy-related food safety.