

People With Existing Health Conditions

Some illnesses, chronic conditions and the treatments for them can affect your immune system. This can make it more difficult to fight off harmful bacteria, leading to serious complications.

Some of the conditions that can affect your immune system are:

- Alcoholism
- Cancer (especially for people receiving chemotherapy)
- Diabetes
- HIV/AIDS
- Organ transplantation

If you are faced with any of these conditions, you should take extra care when handling and preparing your food. Always follow the four food safety steps: clean, separate, cook and chill!

WHAT IS FOOD POISONING?

Foodborne illness (commonly known as food poisoning) usually happens when people eat food that is contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites. Foods that are contaminated with these bacteria don't necessarily look, smell or taste unusual. You can prevent food poisoning at home by always following the four food safety steps: clean, separate, cook and chill.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms of food poisoning can include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Stomach Cramps

If you have signs or symptoms of food poisoning, contact your doctor right away.

Get more safe food tips and information at [ontario.ca/SafeFoodFacts](http://ontario.ca/SafeFoodFacts)

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GET THE  
SAFE  
FOOD  
FACTS

Help your family  
eat safely



MANY CASES OF FOOD POISONING HAPPEN AT HOME. WHO IS AT GREATEST RISK?

Food poisoning can happen to anyone. But if you're pregnant, elderly or have an existing health condition, it might be easier for you to get food poisoning, which may cause more serious conditions. Children are also at greater risk.

Many cases of food poisoning happen at home, so it's important to be careful when you choose and prepare food. Always follow the four food safety steps: clean, separate, cook and chill.

Pregnant Women

Pregnancy changes how your immune system works, making it easier for you to get food poisoning and for you to become very sick. Food poisoning can also make your baby sick before and after being born. To keep yourself and your baby safe during your pregnancy, follow the four food safety steps and avoid foods that might cause food poisoning.

The Elderly

As we age, it gets harder for our immune system to fight harmful bacteria. If you're an older adult, you may be more likely to experience serious longer-term health effects as a result of food poisoning. It's very important to be careful when handling and preparing food.

Children

Food poisoning can have a serious impact on children because their immune systems aren't fully developed. It can be more difficult for them to fight off disease and infections caused by contaminated food. Protect your child from food poisoning by making sure to clean, separate, cook and chill their food properly.



## CLEAN

One of the most important things you can do to prevent food poisoning is cleaning your hands, surfaces and equipment. Do it often and do it well! Bacteria can get onto hands, cutting boards, knives, dishcloths, countertops and the food itself.

### Cleaning tips:

- Always wash your hands before preparing, handling, serving or eating food.
- Keep kitchen equipment, cutting boards, dishes, countertops, tables, taps, sinks and appliances (including fridge door handles) clean.
- Keep your dishcloths, aprons and towels clean by running them through the washing machine often.
- Wash all fresh produce under cold running water.



## SEPARATE

Cross-contamination occurs when bacteria spread from one food item to another. This can easily happen when cooked or ready-to-eat foods come into contact with raw meat or other uncooked foods, dirty hands or contaminated utensils. Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate!

Be aware of possible cross-contamination. Common sources of cross-contamination are:

- Cutting boards, countertops, plates and other food surfaces
- Slicers, mixers and grinders
- Serving utensils, knives and tongs
- Food probe thermometers (these are used to test the inside temperature of food)

### Tips to avoid cross-contamination:

- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the fridge, so that raw juices won't drip onto other foods.
- Use a separate cutting board for raw meat and another for fruits and vegetables.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize cutting boards, utensils and food probe thermometers before re-using.
- Never put cooked food on a plate, cutting board or surface used for raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs.
- Marinate foods in the fridge and don't use the same marinade for basting.



## COOK

Bacteria that can cause food poisoning are killed by high temperatures. Always follow the cooking instructions on food packages and make sure you cook all meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly. After cooking, keep hot food hot! Bacteria grow rapidly when food is in the danger zone, between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F).



### Cooking tips:

- Cook meat, poultry, fish and eggs to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying. Use a food probe thermometer with meat and poultry to be sure!
- After cooking food, keep it at 60°C (140°F) or hotter until it's served.
- Serve hot food while it's hot, or put it in the fridge or freezer as soon as possible once it's cooled (within two hours of preparation).
- Make sure that food and water you cook with is from a safe source.
- Make sure the inside of ground meat items and dishes have reached the correct temperature.
- If you're microwaving, cover your food and stir and rotate it often for even cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a full boil every time you re-heat them.



## CHILL

Make sure your food stays out of the danger zone. To reduce the growth of bacteria, keep cold food cold! Your fridge should always be 4°C (40°F) or colder and your freezer -18°C (0°F) or colder.

### Refrigerator tips:

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, raw or cooked meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products and leftovers within two hours of purchase or preparation.
- Refrigerate fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours of peeling or cutting.
- Store eggs in the main body of your fridge, not the fridge door.
- Don't over-pack your fridge. Cool air needs to circulate.
- In the summer, or when your fridge is full, your fridge may get warmer. Use thermometers in your fridge, freezer and coolers to make sure they stay cold enough.
- Defrost frozen food in the fridge or microwave, not on the kitchen counter or sink.

