

News Column
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Keep Your Food Safe

Taking care of our health is of utmost importance especially during this time. The guidelines that the CDC and KDHE are sharing have always been important but now we are talking about them every day. Here are some tips to help you and those you care for stay safe and healthy today—and every day.

The CDC reports 48 million Americans suffer from a foodborne illness each year. Of that number, 128,000 are hospitalized—each year. You definitely do not want to go to the hospital now and most foodborne cases are largely preventable. Here's what you need to do to stay food safe.

First, wash your hands properly. Wet your hands, add soap and scrub your hands on the top and bottom, in between your fingers and underneath your fingernails for 20-30 seconds. If you do not have soap, the next best thing is to just use water. Hand sanitizer can be used but it really must be used on clean hands.

Second, cook foods to the proper temperatures. Ground beef needs to be cooked to 160 degrees internally and poultry needs to reach 165 degrees. Follow the guidelines for minimum cooking temperatures and rest time for meat, poultry, seafood, and other cooked foods. Be sure to use a food thermometer to check whether meat has reached a safe internal temperature that is hot enough to kill harmful germs that cause food poisoning. Always reheat leftovers to 165°F regardless of the food type.

Third, keep foods that need to be cooked away from ready-to-eat foods. Cross-contamination can be dangerous and can happen not only during the cooking process but also during grocery shopping and food storage.

Fourth, never thaw frozen foods at room temperature. Raw or cooked meat, poultry or egg products, as any perishable foods, must be kept at a safe temperature during "the big thaw." They are safe indefinitely while frozen. However, as soon as they begin to thaw and become warmer than 40 °F, bacteria that may have been present before freezing can begin to multiply. Perishable foods should never be thawed on the counter, or in hot water and must not be left at room temperature for more than two hours. There are three safe ways to thaw food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave.

Lastly, avoid unsafe food practices like washing raw meat and spreading bacteria all over the sink. I can cover more of the myths of food safety in another news release.

I have had requests for recipes since we are cooking at home more frequently. For some basic low budget recipes <https://www.hhs.k-state.edu/ks-snaped/recipes/ez-does-it/index.html>

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