

News Release
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Food Safety Myths

A program that I really enjoy presenting to groups is the Top 10 Myths of Food Safety. I borrowed this from the fightback.org website and it was my last presentation to the Food Service employees of the Hays Schools. We are very thankful to the School Food Service employees and for Jessica's organizational skills as they continue to feed our school children. Thank you to our school food service workers for keeping our food safe to eat as they follow all the food safety guidelines.

MYTH #1: Cross contamination doesn't happen in the refrigerator- it is too cold in there for germs to survive! FACT: Some bacteria can survive and even grow in cool, moist environments like the refrigerator. In fact, *Listeria Monocytogenes* grows at temperatures as low as 35.6°F! A recent NSF International study revealed that the refrigerator produce compartment was the number 1 "germiest" places in the kitchen, containing *Salmonella* and *Listeria*. Remember to keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs. Clean your refrigerator regularly with hot water and soap and clean up food and beverage spills immediately to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

MYTH #2: I don't need to clean the refrigerator produce bin because I only put fruit and vegetables in there. FACT: Naturally occurring bacteria in fresh fruits and vegetables can cause cross-contamination in your refrigerator. To prevent the buildup of bacteria that can cause food poisoning, it is essential to clean your produce bin and other bins in your refrigerator often with hot water and liquid soap, rinse thoroughly, and dry with a clean cloth towel or allow to air dry outside of the refrigerator.

MYTH #3: I don't need to rinse this melon for safety — the part I eat is on the inside! FACT: Sure you're not eating the rind of the melon, but there are many ways for pathogens on the outside of the melon to

contaminate the edible portion. A knife or peeler passing through the rind can carry pathogens from the outside into the flesh of the melon. The rind also touches the edible portion when fruit is arranged or stacked for serving and garnish. Play it safe and rinse your melon under running tap water while rubbing by hand or scrubbing with a clean brush. Dry the melon with a clean cloth or paper towel.

MYTH #4: I eat a vegetarian diet, so I don't have to worry about food poisoning. FACT: Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet, but like other foods they may carry a risk of foodborne illness. Always rinse produce under running tap water, including fruits and vegetables with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables as these products are not intended for consumption. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat" or "washed" do not need to be re-washed.

MYTH #5: Leftovers are safe to eat until they smell bad. FACT: Smell is not an indication of whether food is safe to eat! There are different types of bacteria, some of which cause illness in people and others that don't. The types of bacteria that can cause foodborne illness do not affect the taste, smell, or appearance of food. Freeze or toss refrigerated leftovers within 3 - 4 days, even if they smell and look fine. If you're not sure how long leftovers have been in the refrigerator, toss them. If you're not sure how old your leftovers are, remember: when in doubt, throw it out!

Please join me next week so you can learn about the last of the top ten food safety myths. Stay healthy and stay safe.

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