



Parenting

Food safety

How to protect your family

by Dana Sullivan

Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable to food poisoning, which is most common during the summer (prime picnic and cookout season).

The promising news: Food-borne illnesses are on the decline. In kids under age 5, for instance, potentially fatal cases of diarrhea from certain strains of E. coli in undercooked hamburgers have decreased by 50 percent in the past five years. But whether you're feeding a baby, a toddler, or an older child, it's still important to know how to do it safely:

NEWBORNS AND INFANTS

- Before handling formula or your own breast milk, **wash your hands thoroughly** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Store pumped breast milk in a screw-cap bottle, a hard plastic cup with a tight cap, or heavy freezer bags made for storing human milk. Refrigerate for up to eight days; freeze for up to three months.
- Sterilize bottles (including those used for storage) and nipples by running them through the dishwasher on the "normal" cycle or washing in hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds. Allow to drip-dry.
- Toss out any formula that's past its expiration date.
- When mixing dry formula, you don't need to boil water if you're sure it's clean.
- Once dry or concentrated formula is mixed, **keep it refrigerated and toss after 24 hours.**
- After ready-to-use formula is opened, **keep it refrigerated and covered, up to 48 hours.**
- Whether formula or breast milk, always **throw away what's left after a feeding.** Germs from your baby's mouth can contaminate the milk; some can grow even in the refrigerator.
- **Never let a bottle sit around:** After two hours, it can become contaminated with salmonella, which can make a baby very sick.
- **Skip the microwave.** It'll kill some bacteria but can make breast milk or formula scalding hot, even when shaken.

OLDER BABIES AND TODDLERS

Once your baby starts solids, you'll rely on jarred or homemade baby food, or a combination of both. For safety's sake:

- When shopping, **check the expiration dates** and make sure the safety seal is secure.
- At home, **wipe lids with a clean towel before opening jars** and transfer contents to a bowl before feeding your baby.
- **Never dip a spoon into a jar** or a bowl, feed your baby, and then refrigerate the leftovers. As with a baby bottle, germs from
- his mouth can contaminate the food and might grow in the refrigerator.
- Use leftover jarred foods that contain meat or chicken within **48 hours**; fruits and vegetables are safe for three days.
- If you're preparing your own homemade food, first **clean all utensils** with dish soap and hot water, including the blades of the food processor.
- Homemade pureed baby foods can be **refrigerated for one to two days** and can be frozen for three to four months.

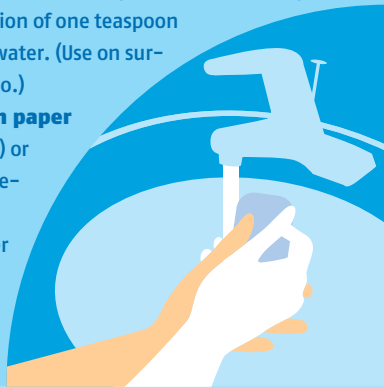
Warning: Never give a **baby under age 1** any food that contains **honey**, even if it's been baked or cooked. It may contain botulism spores, which can be deadly for infants. >>

OLDER KIDS AND GROWN-UPS

To keep everyone safe from food-borne illnesses, follow these four steps when you cook:

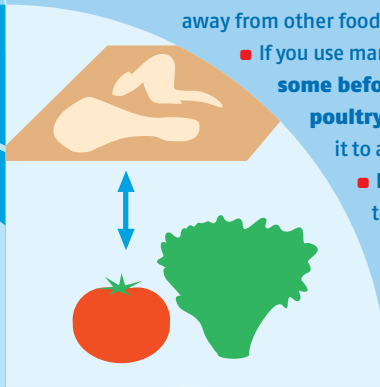
CLEAN

- **Wash your hands** in hot, soapy water for 20 seconds every time they touch raw animal foods—and whenever you use the bathroom, change a diaper, or pet the dog or cat.
- **Run plastic cutting boards through the dishwasher;** wash wooden ones with hot, soapy water. Occasionally, disinfect with a solution of one teaspoon bleach to one quart water. (Use on surfaces and utensils, too.)
- **Clean surfaces with paper towels** (not sponges) or cloth towels (machine-wash twice a week.)
- **Rinse produce** under running water. Use a vegetable brush on carrots and potatoes.



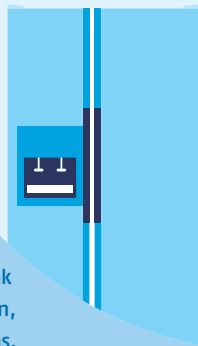
SEPARATE

- **Set aside one cutting board** for fresh produce and another one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. (Discard any board that has deep cuts, which can harbor bacteria.)
- **Store raw meat, poultry, and seafood in your refrigerator or freezer in sealed containers or plastic bags,** away from other foods.
 - If you use marinade for sauce, **reserve some before you put raw meat, poultry, or seafood in it**—or bring it to a boil before you use it.
 - **Never return cooked foods** to the dishes in which they were marinated raw.
 - **Don't overstuff** your refrigerator—air needs to circulate to keep food cold.



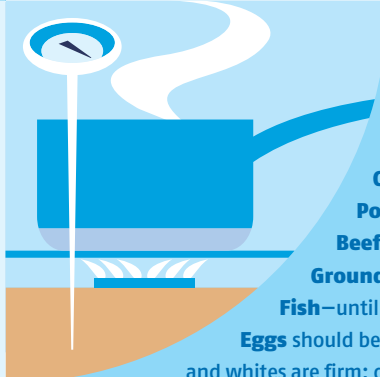
CHILL

- **Use a refrigerator thermometer** to make sure the temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.
- **Refrigerate all meat, fish, and poultry within an hour** of leaving the store. Cook or freeze within two days; if frozen, they're safe for up to three months.
- **Thaw frozen fish, meat, and poultry in the refrigerator.** In a hurry? Put food (in a watertight container) in cold water in the sink and change the water every 30 minutes, or defrost in the microwave. Cook immediately.
- **Refrigerate leftovers within two hours** of preparation; eat in the next couple of days.



COOK

- Make sure poultry, meat, fish, and eggs get hot enough:
 - Chicken**—165°F
 - Pork**—160°F
 - Beef steaks**—145°F
 - Ground beef or turkey**—165°F
 - Fish**—until it's flaky and opaque.
- **Eggs** should be cooked until both yolks and whites are firm; don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or partially cooked.
- **When cooking in the microwave, cover, stir, and rotate** foods for even cooking.
- **When reheating sauce, soup, or gravy, bring to a rolling boil.**



Picnic and barbecue safety

- Keep food refrigerated until the last moment.
- Put out modest amounts and replenish as needed.
- When grilling, marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter. If you precook food in the microwave, transfer it to the hot grill immediately.
- If the temperature outside is over 90 degrees, toss out any perishable food after an hour.
- If you're traveling with food and drink, keep your cooler in the passenger compartment—not in the trunk, which can get hot.

First aid

Is it food poisoning?

Eating or drinking food that's contaminated almost always causes diarrhea—a serious health risk for young infants—and may also cause vomiting, nausea, abdominal cramps, and fever. Symptoms can appear in 30 minutes, 12 hours—or up to a week later. See the pediatrician, who can help determine the cause. It's especially important to call if you have a baby under 1 with diarrhea. Whether the cause is food poisoning or something else, it needs attention.

Sources: Althea Zaneosky, adjunct professor of sports and nutrition at Drexel University, Philadelphia; Jeff Hampl, Ph.D., associate professor of nutrition at Arizona State University, Mesa; La Leche League International; Partnership for Food Safety Education; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention