

Create Safe Food

 **CLEAN**

Wash hands, utensils, and cutting boards before and after contact with raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.

United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2018

 **SEPARATE**

Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs away from foods that won't be cooked.

 **COOK**

Use a food thermometer to determine if your food is properly cooked. You can't tell food is safely cooked by how it looks or feels.

 **CHILL**

Refrigerate leftovers and perishable foods within 2 hours. Keep the refrigerator at 40° F or below.



Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

MEAT	TEMPERATURE
Beef, Pork, Veal, and Lamb (roast, steaks, chops, fresh or smoked ham)	145° F and allow to rest for at least 3 minutes. (Rest: let meat sit after removing from the heat before cutting or eating it).
Fully Cooked Ham (to reheat)	165° F
Ground Meats	160° F
All Poultry (whole parts or ground)	165° F
Eggs and Egg Dishes	160° F
Leftovers and Casseroles	165° F
Fish and Shellfish	145° F

United States Department of Agriculture, 2015

Clean

Hands. Washing hands is an important step when preparing and before eating a meal. Always wash your hands before preparing food and after handling raw meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood.

- 1 Wet** your hands with warm, running water and apply soap.
- 2 Lather** hands by rubbing them together to make bubbles with the soap.
- 3 Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Make sure to scrub on the top and bottoms of hands, under fingernails and between fingers. Try singing a song like "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" to track the time. If you find that you sing it fast, sing it twice.
- 4 Rinse** your hands with warm, running water. Turn faucet off with a clean paper towel. (Remember, it was turned on with dirty hands.)
- 5 Dry** hands with a clean paper towel. Use a paper towel to open the bathroom/restroom door. Throw away the towel.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016

Fruits and Vegetables. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables in water before peeling, eating, or cooking. Do not use soap. Vegetable brushes are helpful. It is not recommended you wash meat or poultry before cooking.

United States Department of Agriculture, 2013

Surfaces. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot, soapy water before and after preparing food. Wash anything (knives, hands, plates, cutting boards) that touches meat, poultry, and seafood before using it for other foods. Choose plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. Consider using paper towels for kitchen cleanup. If using cloth towels, launder them and switch them out often. Avoid using the same cloth or paper towel for cleaning up foods that should be kept separate.



Separate

Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from other foods in your grocery cart, in your refrigerator and as you prepare food.

GROCERY CART AND BAGS	REFRIGERATOR	FOOD PREPARATION
Keep meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood separate from other items in the cart. Use separate plastic bags in the cart for these items, if possible. Make sure to have these items bagged separately from other foods.	Keep meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood separate from other foods in the refrigerator. Make sure that these items are stored in sealed bags or containers. It is best to keep them on the bottom shelf to avoid dripping on other food.	Use one cutting board for cutting raw meat, poultry, and seafood and another board for cutting other foods. (If only one board is available, make sure to wash thoroughly with soap and water after using it to cut raw meat, poultry, and seafood.)



Cook

Proper cooking kills many types of bacteria that can make people sick. Do not rely on the color or texture of food to determine doneness. The best way to know if meat, poultry, eggs, seafood, leftovers, and casseroles have cooked to a safe temperature is by checking with a food thermometer. Make sure to check the temperature at the thickest part of the food. See the USDA chart on the front page for the recommended safe temperatures.



Chill

Keep your refrigerator between 38° and 40° F and your freezer at 0° F. Make sure to refrigerate or freeze perishables and leftovers within 2 hours. Marinate food in the refrigerator. Always defrost food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Do not thaw food on the counter. Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator. Do not overfill the refrigerator or freezer.

FIGHT BAC! Partnership for Food Safety Education, 2016

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

FightBAC.org

Supported by FIGHT BAC!, a food safety education partnership, this site has more information about the core four practices: clean, separate, cook and chill.

REFERENCES

CDC. (2024). About Handwashing. Clean Hands. <https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/about/index.html>

The Core Four Practices. (2024). Fightbac.org. <https://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-basics/the-core-four-practices/>

United States Department of Agriculture. (2024). Washing Food: Does it Promote Food Safety? Retrieved from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/washing-food-does-it-promote-food>

“Danger Zone” (40°F - 140°F) | Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2023). Usda.gov. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/danger-zone-40f-140f>

United States Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). Check Your Steps. Foodsafety.gov. Retrieved from <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/4-steps-to-food-safety>

