



# Tidbit Times

December 2011

## The Four Basic Steps: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill Preventing the Spread of Foodborne Disease this Holiday Season

This month's Tidbit Times focuses on food safety. During the holidays and throughout the year, these tips can be used to reduce your family's risk of foodborne illness. Page 2 of this edition could be taped up to the inside of a kitchen cupboard or magnetized to the fridge for a quick reference of safe storage times and recommended cooking temperatures. As a reminder, be especially careful when preparing food for children, pregnant women, those in poor health, and older adults.

### Check Your Steps

Following four simple steps can help keep your family safe from food poisoning at home.



**Clean.** Wash hands, cutting boards, utensils, and countertops.



Wash fruits and veggies—but not meat, poultry, or eggs. Washing raw meats can help bacteria

spread, because their juices may splash onto (and contaminate) your sink and countertops. All commercial eggs are washed before sale. Any extra handling (washing) of the eggs, may contaminate other foods especially if the shells would crack.



**Separate.** Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from ready-to-eat foods. Use

separate cutting boards and plates for produce and for meats and eggs. Placing



ready-to-eat food on a surface that held raw meat, or eggs can spread bacteria by cross-contamination and make you sick.



**Cook.** Use a food thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to the safe recommended internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Use the Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures chart on the next page as a guide.

**Chill.** Keep the refrigerator below 40°F, to cool food that will spoil. Your freezer should be 0 °F or below.



### Five Common Food Safety Mistakes

#### Mistake #1: Tasting food to see if it's still good

You can't taste (or smell or see) the tiny amounts of bacteria that can make you sick. When it comes to some germs, such as *Salmonella*, all it takes is 15 to 20 cells

in undercooked food to cause food poisoning. Tasting a tiny amount can cause illness.

**Solution:** Throw food out before harmful bacteria grows. Check the Safe Storage Times chart on the next page to be sure.

#### Mistake #2: Thawing food on the counter

Harmful germs can multiply extremely rapidly at room temperature.

**Solution:** Thaw food safely:

- In the refrigerator
- In cold water
- In the microwave

#### Mistake #3: Letting food cool before putting it in the fridge

Bacteria can grow in foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them.

**Solution:** Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours. In the summer months, cut this time down to one hour. Divide leftovers into several clean, shallow containers, which allows them to chill faster.

#### Mistake #4: Eating raw cookie dough



Uncooked eggs may contain *Salmonella* or other harmful bacteria.

**Solution:** Always cook eggs thoroughly. Avoid foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs.

#### Mistake #5: "It isn't that big of a deal if I get food poisoning."

"I just have to tough it out for a day or two and then it's over." Many people don't know it, but some foodborne illnesses can actually lead to long-term health conditions, and 3,000 Americans a year die from foodborne illness.

**Solution:** Follow the four basics steps to reduce your risk and report suspected illness from food to your local health department.

*This information was found at [foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov).*

### Sheboygan County Division of Public Health

1011 N. 8th St.

Sheboygan, WI 53081

Phone: 920-459-4382

Fax: 920-459-0529

Email:

[publichealth@](mailto:publichealth@co.sheboygan.wi.us)

[co.sheboygan.wi.us](mailto:publichealth@co.sheboygan.wi.us)



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## Storage Times for the Refrigerator and Freezer

These short but safe time limits for home-refrigerated foods will keep them from spoiling or becoming dangerous to eat. The guidelines for freezer storage are for quality only. Frozen foods remain safe indefinitely.

Category	Food	Refrigerator (40° F or below)	Freezer (0° F or below)
<b>Salads</b>	Egg, chicken, ham, tuna & macaroni salads	3 to 5 days	Does not freeze well
<b>Hot Dogs</b>	Opened package	1 week	1 to 2 months
	Unopened package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
<b>Luncheon Meat</b>	Opened package or deli sliced	3 to 5 days	1 to 2 months
	Unopened package	2 weeks	1 to 2 months
<b>Bacon &amp; Sausage</b>	Bacon	7 days	1 month
	Sausage, raw - from chicken, turkey, pork, beef	1 to 2 days	1 to 2 months
<b>Hamburger &amp; other ground meats</b>	Hamburger, ground beef, turkey, veal, pork, lamb, & mixtures of them	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
<b>Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb and Pork</b>	Steaks	3 to 5 days	6 to 12 months
	Chops	3 to 5 days	4 to 6 months
	Roasts	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
<b>Fresh Poultry</b>	Chicken or Turkey, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
	Chicken or Turkey, pieces	1 to 2 days	9 months
<b>Soups &amp; Stews</b>	Vegetable or meat added	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
<b>Leftovers</b>	Cooked meat or poultry	3 to 4 days	2 to 6 months
	Chicken nuggets or patties	3 to 4 days	1 to 3 months
	Pizza	3 to 4 days	1 to 2 months

## Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures

Use this chart and a food thermometer to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, and other cooked foods reach a safe minimum internal temperature. Remember, you can't tell whether meat is safely cooked by looking at it. Any cooked, uncured red meats – including pork – can be pink, even when the meat has reached a safe internal temperature.

### Why the Rest Time is Important

After you remove meat from a grill, oven, or other heat source, allow it to rest for the specified amount of time. During the rest time, its temperature remains constant or continues to rise, which destroys harmful germs.

Category	Food	Temperature (°F)	Rest Time
<b>Ground Meat &amp; Meat Mixtures</b>	Beef, Pork, Veal, Lamb	160	None
	Turkey, Chicken	145	None
<b>Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb</b>	Steaks, roasts, chops	165	3 minutes
<b>Poultry</b>	Chicken & Turkey, whole	165	None
	Poultry breasts, roasts	165	None
	Poultry thighs, legs, wings	165	None
	Duck & Goose	165	None
	Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	165	None
<b>Pork and Ham</b>	Fresh pork	145	3 minutes
	Fresh ham (raw)	145	3 minutes
	Precooked ham (to reheat)	140	None
<b>Eggs &amp; Egg Dishes</b>	Eggs	Cook until yolk and white are firm	None
	Egg dishes	160	None
<b>Leftovers &amp; Casseroles</b>	Leftovers	165	None
	Casseroles	165	None
<b>Seafood</b>	Fin Fish	145 or cook until flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.	None
	Shrimp, lobster, and crabs	Cook until flesh is pearly and opaque.	None
	Clams, oysters, and mussels	Cook until shells open during cooking.	None
	Scallops	Cook until flesh is milky white or opaque and firm.	None

The following charts were found at [Foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov): the gateway to food safety information provided by government agencies including the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).