



How to Avoid Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness peaks in the summer, mainly because disease-causing bacteria multiply faster in hotter temperatures. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 6 Americans gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases each year. Learn to protect yourself with these precautions.

Steps

- 1 Be clean.** Make sure to practice proper hand washing for 20 seconds with warm water and soap. Wash hands before and after handling food. It is also a must to wash utensils and surfaces before they are used.
- 2 Separate things.** Prevent cross-contamination by using different cutting boards for meat and produce. Avoid raw meat, eggs and seafood to come into contact with ready to eat foods. Don't reuse plates that previously held raw food.
- 3 Be wise when cooking.** Let food reach the desired internal cooking temperature. Use of a food thermometer is a must. USDA recommends pork chops and steaks to be cooked at 145 °F (63 °C) with 3 minute rest time before consumption. For burgers, the safe cooking temperature is at 160 °F (71 °C) and for poultry, 165 °F (74 °C).
- 4 Chill things.** Foodborne illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless refrigerated. Place leftovers back on ice as soon as you finish eating. Food will cool more quickly if they are divided into a number of containers for refrigeration. Spoiled food changes in smell and appearance; however, if you're not sure, throw it out.
- 5 Report outbreaks.** If you suspect a foodborne illness outbreak, call the local health department immediately. The US Food and Drug Administration note that "calls from concerned citizens are how outbreaks are first detected. If a public health official contacts you to find out more about an illness you had, your cooperation is important. In public health investigations, it can be as important to talk to healthy people as to ill people."