

Avoiding Food Poisoning

- Aim to keep the temperature of the fridge between 0°C and 5°C (32°F and 41°F).
- Keep a fridge thermometer in the fridge and check the temperature regularly.
- Keep the perishable foods, like cooked meats, in the top of the fridge separate from raw foods.
- Take chilled and frozen food home as quickly as possible.
- Wrap or cover all raw or uncooked foods so that they can't touch or drip on to other foods and contaminate them.
- Don't overload the fridge: the cooling air that circulates to keep the fridge cold gets blocked and pockets of warm air form.
- Don't put hot food in the fridge: let it cool first.
- Don't keep food beyond its "use by" date.
- Check what the label says about refrigeration and shelf life.
- Empty any part-used can into a bowl and cover it, otherwise the tin may contaminate the food.
- Do not handle food if you are unwell with diarrhoea and/or vomiting.

Large print, taped or other language versions of all or any part of this leaflet can be made available on request. Please telephone 0115 931 6030.

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Food poisoning is an unpleasant experience. It can make you ill for a few hours to several days and the symptoms can range from very mild to very severe.

It is usually bacteria that cause food poisoning and there are several different sorts. Most people know of Salmonella and that it is especially associated with poultry and eggs. It causes severe stomach ache and diarrhoea within about one or two days of eating the contaminated food.

Another bacteria, Clostridium perfringens, is carried in raw vegetables and raw meats. There are many others. One thing to be sure of is that these bacteria are likely to be present in one form or another in the kitchen.

Fortunately only a small number of these bacteria will be found in, or make their way onto, freshly prepared foods ready for eating. As long as they remain in small numbers they will be harmless. However if they are allowed to grow and increase in numbers then they will cause illness.



Sources of bacteria

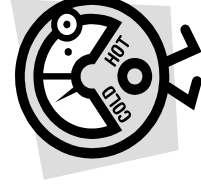
- People - hands, cuts, nose throat, intestines
- Raw food - especially raw meat and vegetables
- Pets
- Insects
- Waste bins, dirty surfaces and dish cloths

In order to prevent food poisoning it is important to know how to stop the bacteria growing to sufficient numbers to cause food poisoning.

To know how to prevent bacteria from growing we need to know what foods they like to grow on, and how time and temperature affect them.

Food bacteria grow quickly in

- cooked meats, gravies and sauces
- dairy products
- eggs and egg products
- rice
- shellfish



Bacteria grow well in high protein foods, but they will not grow in very cold or very hot conditions, and provided food is always kept below 5°C (refrigerator temperature) or above 63°C (hot food temperature) the food should be safe.

Food which is left in the danger zone between 5°C and 63°C will allow bacteria to grow. At body temperature (37°C) bacteria will grow very fast, and one bacteria will divide into two in ten minutes.

After three hours a food which was initially harmless, containing only a few bacteria, will have become harmful and will contain millions of bacteria.

This fact gives us one of the most important food hygiene rules :-

“Never leave high risk food at room temperature for more than 2 hours”

Cook food thoroughly

It is also important to make sure that meats are thoroughly cooked. A common cause of food poisoning is improperly cooked meat and cooked food that have been cross-contaminated with bacteria from raw foods. Always remember when cooking meats the following hygiene rules;

Wash your hands before and after handling raw meat, after visiting the toilet, handling pets, etc.

Clean and disinfect surfaces, chopping boards, knives and any other tool that has come into contact with raw meat before using with ready-to-eat foods or use separate utensils for raw and cooked.

Always cook meat thoroughly so that food poisoning bacteria such as E.coli 0157, Salmonella and Listeria are killed.

The centre of the meat must reach a core temperature of at least 70°C for 2 minutes or an equivalent time/temperature combination of 75°C for 30 seconds or until the juices run clear.