

## Food Safety Myths Exposed

**Myth #1: Food poisoning isn't that serious; you get over it in a day or two.**

Fact: Many people don't know it, but some foodborne illnesses can actually lead to long-term health conditions, and thousands die from it every year.

**Myth #2: I can thaw meat out on the counter because it's frozen, so it's safe.**

Fact: Bacteria grow surprisingly rapidly at room temperatures, so the counter is not the place to thaw foods. Remember the danger zone temperatures!

**Myth #3: The more bleach I use in the kitchen, the cleaner it will be.**

Fact: There is no advantage to using more bleach than needed. To clean kitchen surfaces effectively, use just one teaspoon of liquid, unscented bleach to one cup of water. Always follow directions as stated on the label.

**Myth #4: I don't need to wash fruits or vegetables if I'm going to peel them.**

Fact: It's easy to transfer bacteria from the peel or rind you're cutting to the inside of your fruits and veggies, so it's important to wash all produce, even if you plan to peel it.

**Myth #5: To get rid of any bacteria on my meat, poultry, or seafood, I should rinse off the juices with water first.**

Fact: Actually, rinsing meat, poultry, or seafood with water can increase your chance of food poisoning by splashing juices (and any bacteria they might contain) onto your sink and counters. The best way to cook meat, poultry, or seafood safely is to make sure you cook it to the right temperature.

**Myth #6: The only reason to let food rest after it's been microwaved is to ensure that you don't burn yourself on hot food.**

Fact: Letting food rest for a few minutes helps your food cook more completely by allowing colder areas of food time to absorb heat from hotter areas of food.

**Myth #7: Leftovers are safe to eat until they smell bad.**

Fact: Some kinds of bacteria that cause food poisoning do not affect the look, smell, or taste of food. Follow safe storage times and always check sell by and use by dates.

**Myth #8: Once food has been cooked, all the bacteria have been killed, so there's no danger once cooking has taken place.**

Fact: The possibility of bacterial growth increases after cooking because the drop in temperature allows bacteria to thrive. This is why keeping cooked food warmed to the right temperature is critical for food safety.



**Myth #9: Marinades are acidic, which kills bacteria so I can marinate foods on the counter.**

Fact: Even in the presence of acidic marinade, bacteria can grow very rapidly at room temperatures. To marinate foods safely, it's important to marinate them in the refrigerator.

**Myth #10: I want my produce to be safe so I should wash fruits and veggies with soap or detergent before I use them.**

Fact: It's best not to use soaps or detergents on produce, since these products can linger on foods and are not safe for consumption. Using clean running water is actually the best way to remove bacteria and wash produce safely.

### Dangerous Food Safety Mistakes

*When it comes to some germs, such as Salmonella, all it takes is 15 to 20 cells in undercooked food to cause food poisoning. And just a tiny taste of food with botulism toxin can cause paralysis and even death.*

Here are some common food safety mistakes.

**Mistake #1: Taste food to see if it's fresh.**

Why it's a bad idea: You can't taste (or smell or see) the bacteria that cause food poisoning. Tasting only a tiny amount can cause serious illness.

Solution: Throw food out before harmful bacteria grows. Check safe storage times.

**Mistake #2: Put cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat.**

Why it's a bad idea: Germs from the raw meat can spread to the cooked meat.

Solution: Always use separate plates for raw meat and cooked meat. The same rule applies to poultry and seafood.

**Mistake #3: Thaw food on the counter.**

Why it's a bad idea: Harmful germs can multiply extremely rapidly at room temperature.

Solution: Thaw food safely: in the fridge, in cold water or in the microwave.

**Mistake #4: Let food cool before putting it in the fridge.**

Why it's a bad idea: Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them.

Solution: Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours (or within 1 hour if the temperature is over 90°F.)

**Mistake #5: Eat raw cookie dough (or other foods with uncooked eggs) - it's OK!**

Why it's a bad idea: Uncooked eggs may contain Salmonella or other harmful bacteria.

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



**Mistake #6: Undercook meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs.**

Why it's a bad idea: Cooked food is safe only after it's been cooked to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

Solution: Use safe minimum cooking temperatures chart and a food thermometer.

**Mistake #7: Wash your hands once or twice while you are cooking.**

Why it's a bad idea: Germs on your hands can contaminate the food that you or others eat.

Solution: Wash hands the right way – for 20 seconds with soap and running water. Do it several times while you are cooking to prevent the spread of germs.

SOURCE:

<http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/myths/index.html>