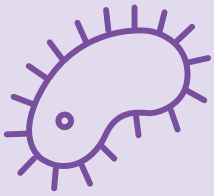
Fact Sheet | Food Safety

Did you know?



Most food poisoning is caused by bacteria and viruses.

Food that looks and smells fine may still make you ill.

You may get sick within an hour or more than a week after eating contaminated food.

Pregnant women, young children, older adults and people who are immunocompromised are at greater risk of food poisoning.

As we age, our bodies become more susceptible to food poisoning, which can lead to serious health complications and even death. Older adults are particularly vulnerable due to their weaker immune response, slower digestive system, and reduced ability to eliminate harmful bacteria and toxins. Additionally, decreased stomach acid production and underlying medical conditions like cancer can further increase the risk. It is crucial for us to prioritise food safety and hygiene to safeguard our health and well-being.

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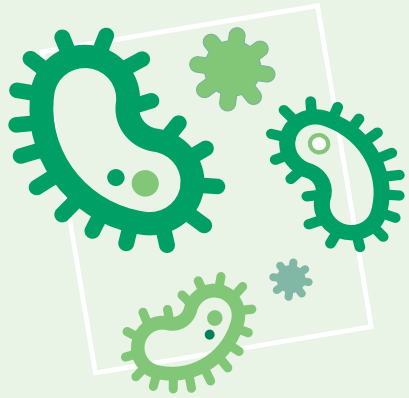
What you need to know about risk

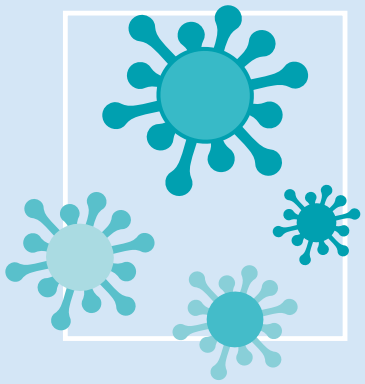
Bacteria

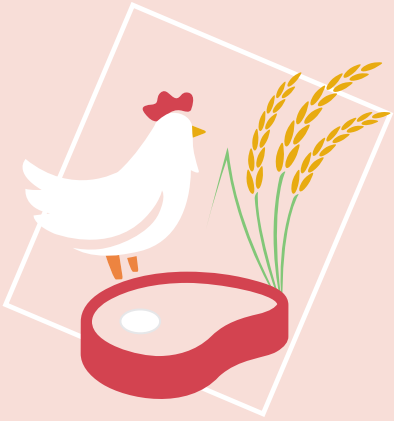


- Many types of bacteria are beneficial and necessary for our overall health
- Lactobacillus bulgaricus is a common “good bacteria”, it helps convert milk into yoghurt and cheese
- Some bacteria may not make you ill but can spoil the food
- Some can produce toxins or spores that may survive cooking and can make you ill very quickly.

Viruses

- Viruses are not naturally found in food
- You can’t get a cold or flu from food
- Infected food handlers with poor hand hygiene can contaminate food with viruses
- Contaminated food may cause vomiting and diarrhoea.





Potentially high risk foods

- Provide a perfect growing environment for bacteria to grow
- For example: raw and cooked meat, cooked rice, cooked vegetables, prepared salad and milk.

Reducing the risk of food poisoning

1 Practise good hygiene

- Wash your hands regularly - wash for at least 20 seconds and dry thoroughly including before starting food handling, after handling potentially high risk foods
- Wash hands after going to the toilet
- Avoid handling/preparing food for others if you are experiencing vomiting or diarrhoea, wait until 48 hrs after symptoms have ceased
- Clean equipment and surfaces thoroughly
- Rinse all fresh produce; fruits and veggies.

2 Don't cross contaminate

- Cross contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria from raw food to cooked or fresh food with your hands or kitchen equipment like a cutting board or knife
- Store high risk food securely at the bottom of the grocery trolley or fridge and wrap to ensure no contact with fresh foods including drippings
- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly, along with any equipment used, before moving onto another food
- Ensure risky foods don't come into contact with cooked or fresh foods.

3 Cooking potentially high risk food

- Cook and reheat potentially high risk foods to above 60°C for at least 2 minutes
- Bacteria cannot grow in temperatures above 60°c and will start to die as the heat increases
- Ensure food is cooked all the way through - using a thermometer is encouraged
- Package cooked food into small and clean containers and place straight into the fridge to cool quickly
- Follow the 2:4 rule - time that potentially hazardous foods may be in the 'danger zone' and what action to take
  - 2 hours or less = okay to eat or refrigerate
  - 2-4 hours = okay to eat
  - 4 hours or over = discard.

4 Storing potentially high risk food

- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or microwave
- Bacteria thrive in the temperature range known as the 'danger zone', which is between 5°C and 60°C
- Store food below 5°C, the colder it is the slower the bacteria grows
- Be aware that mould and spoilage bacteria can be better adapted to growing below 5°C, hence, food can still spoil
- Monitor how many days food has been stored in the fridge.

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Southern CrossCare Community Foundation