

## Food Safety in Children Older than 1 Year Preventing Foodborne Illness

Foodborne illness, also called food poisoning, is caused by eating or drinking food and beverages that contain harmful bacteria. Just a small amount of bacteria can make your child sick.

Children are at high risk for getting foodborne illness because:

- they weigh less and have smaller bodies than older children and adults, and
- their immune systems can't fight off bacteria as well as healthy older children and adults.

We don't know when children "grow out of" this higher risk category. Foodborne illness caused by bacteria, like Salmonella and some E. Coli, is most common in children less than 10 years old.



### Steps you can take

Some foods are much more likely to cause foodborne illness than others. These foods include raw meat, fish and seafood, and poultry and eggs. Use the following tips to lower the risk of foodborne illness for you and your family.

1. Wash your hands and all areas where food is prepared.
  - Before and after handling food, wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds.
  - Wash utensils, dishes, cutting boards, and counter tops with hot soapy water.
2. Teach your child to wash her hands for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet and before eating.
  - To help your child learn how long to wash her hands, have her sing a short song like "Twinkle, twinkle little star" while she washes.

3. Do not offer your child raw or undercooked meat, fish, poultry or eggs.
4. Children less than 5 years old should avoid sushi made with raw fish.
5. Do not offer your child unpasteurized milk or milk products, or unpasteurized juice or cider.
6. Food that is unsafe does not always smell or look bad. Never taste a food or beverage you are unsure about. Throw it away.
  - Do not keep raw fish, poultry, or ground meat in the fridge longer than 2 days.
  - Other raw cuts of beef, pork or lamb can be kept in the fridge for up to 5 days.
  - Do not keep cooked meat, fish or poultry in the fridge for more than 3 to 5 days. For more information about safe storage of food, see Additional Resources.
7. Keep raw or uncooked meat, fish, seafood, poultry and eggs away from cooked food and produce at all times.
  - Wash all cutting boards and other dishes that came into contact with raw food before using them for other foods.
  - Wash your hands between handling raw and cooked foods.
8. Cook foods to a safe temperature. Cooking foods to a safe temperature kills bacteria.
  - Safe cooking temperatures are different for different foods.
  - Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of cooked foods. For information about the safe cooking temperature of foods, see Additional Resources.
9. Heat leftovers to at least 74°C (165°F). Food reheated in a microwave should reach 88°C (190°F) and then be left covered for two minutes afterwards.
10. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. This keeps food out of the “danger zone” (the temperature at which bacteria multiply the fastest).

- Keep hot food at 60°C (140°F) or higher.
  - Keep cold foods at 4°C (40°F) or below. Your refrigerator temperature should be 4°C (40°F).
11. Eat foods as soon as possible after they are cooked. If hot food is not going to be eaten right away, cool it and put it in the fridge immediately.
    - Do not keep food at room temperature for more than two hours.
  12. Do not put food that has been partly eaten back in the refrigerator for eating later. Throw it out.
    - If your child's appetite is small, serve small portions. Offer a second helping if she finishes and want more.
  13. If your child helps you in the kitchen, do not allow her to eat uncooked baking such as cookie dough, or lick cake batter off the spatula.
    - These contain raw egg that could make her sick.
  14. Keep school and daycare lunches in the fridge until eaten. If this is not possible, pack lunches with an ice pack to keep them cold.
  15. Wash fresh fruits and vegetables before eating.
    - Use running water and scrub the surface of the produce with a vegetable brush when possible.
  16. Children under 5 years should not eat bean sprouts (such as mung bean or alfalfa sprouts) unless they are well cooked.
    - Raw bean sprouts often carry harmful bacteria such as Salmonella and E. coli.



## Additional Resources

HealthLinkBC. Medically approved non-emergency health information.  
[www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

Dietitian Services Fact Sheets available by mail (call 8-1-1).

- Food Safety in Children Older than 1 Year – Other Issues
- Storing Foods in the Cupboard or Pantry
- Storing Food in the Refrigerator

Fight Bac! Keep Food Safe From Bacteria. Cook to Proper Temperatures. [www.fightbac.org/safe-food-handling/cook](http://www.fightbac.org/safe-food-handling/cook).

*These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.*



## Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to [www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating) or call 8-1-1 (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.