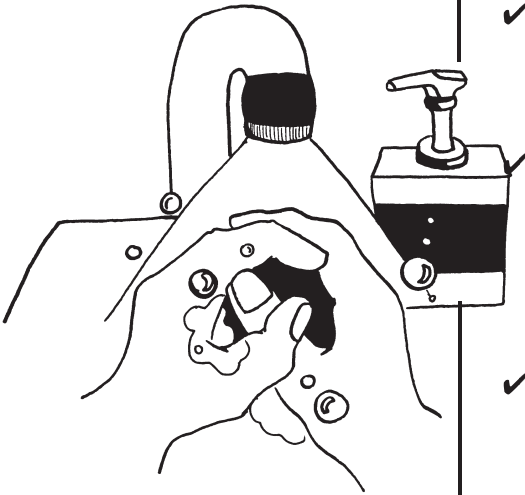


Food Handling & Housekeeping

In the United States, food-borne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, and 5,000 deaths each year.

Most of the victims are very young, very old, or have weakened immune systems. By storing and cooking foods safely and keeping your kitchen clean, you can reduce your family's risk of becoming ill.



Healthy home tips on food handling

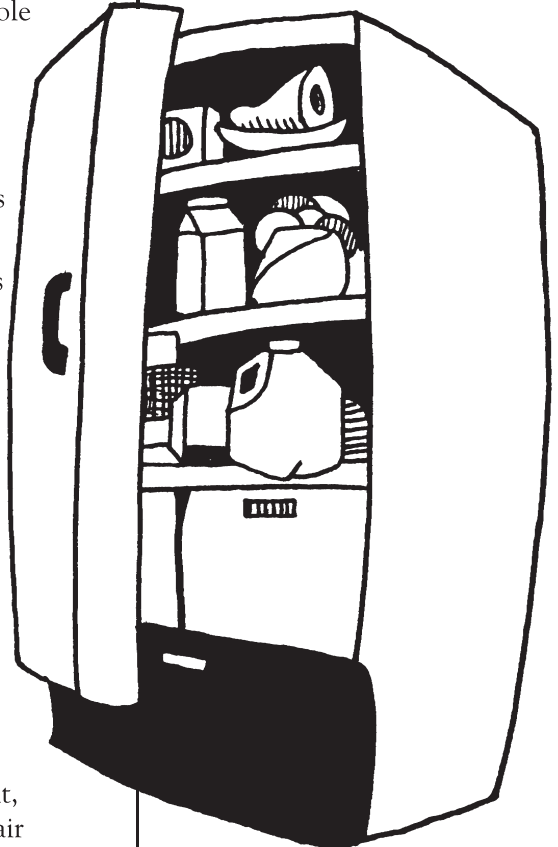
- ✓ Avoid cross contamination. Wash your hands every time before coming into contact with food. Wash hands/utensils after handling raw meat, fish, or poultry.
 - ✓ Wash your hands often. Use soap and warm water to wash, and paper towels or clean cloth towels to dry your hands. Research has proven that frequent hand washing is the most effective way to prevent food-borne illnesses.
 - ✓ Keep perishable foods refrigerated or frozen until they are used. Thaw frozen items in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or a microwave (as part of the continuing cooking process). Marinate food in the refrigerator.
 - ✓ Make sure the temperature in your refrigerator is below 40 degrees F. Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator and check it often. Adjust the thermostat to a cooler setting if necessary.
- Examine foods and all date labeling. Buy foods with the longest period to the expiration date. Don't buy food items if the packaging is damaged. Throw away foods that don't look and smell fresh. A change in the odor or appearance of foods is often a sign of spoilage. Throw away eggs with cracked shells.
- ✓ Be sure cutting boards and knives are thoroughly scrubbed and washed with soapy water after each use. These items can easily transfer disease-causing bacteria from raw meats and poultry to vegetables, fruit, or cooked meat. Use different cutting boards for raw and ready-to-eat foods.
 - ✓ Don't use marinades that have come into contact with raw meat or poultry as dips or for basting. If you want to use the marinade for these purposes, boil it first or prepare a separate portion for that use.
 - ✓ Store raw meat, poultry, and fish in the meat drawer of your refrigerator or in tightly sealed

plastic bags to prevent juices from leaking onto other foods. Thaw frozen meats, fish and poultry in a pan on the lowest shelf so that juices won't drip onto other foods.

- ✓ Cover ready-to-eat foods in the fridge to protect them from cross-contamination by raw meats or unclean surfaces.
- ✓ Use effective and protective plastics for freezing foods.
- ✓ Use a meat thermometer to be sure meats are thoroughly cooked, especially ground meats from combined sources, like hamburger. Beef, lamb, and pork should reach an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees F. Juices should run clear and there should be no sign of pink inside the meat. Poultry should reach an internal temperature of 170 (breasts) to 180 (whole birds and thighs) degrees F.
- ✓ Cook all seafood. Avoid eating raw fish, raw clams, oysters, and mussels. The US Food and Drug Administration recommends cooking seafood to an internal temperature of 145 degrees F for 15 seconds.
- ✓ Cook eggs until the whites are firm and the yolks begin to harden. Don't eat foods that contain raw eggs such as cookie dough, egg dressings, eggnog, or homemade mayonnaise. Pasteurized egg products are available that can be used safely to prepare these foods.
- ✓ To prevent illness, hot foods should be held at 140 degrees F or higher and cold foods should be held at 40 degrees F or lower until they are served.
- ✓ Cool foods rapidly before storage. If you are preparing large quantities of food for later use, cool the food rapidly. Some methods include: placing the container in an ice-water bath, dividing the food into several small containers before refrigerating, including ice as an ingredient, stirring with an ice wand, and providing greater air circulation around the product container.

Food safety

Meats, poultry, fish, dairy products, and eggs can spoil quickly. These foods naturally contain bacteria that can cause illness if the foods are not stored or cooked properly.



Housekeeping

Many harmful germs can survive for several hours on kitchen surfaces. Reduce your risk of illness by keeping cutting boards, countertops, utensils, dishcloths, and towels clean. Don't use sponges in the kitchen. They tend to collect small food particles and are difficult to clean.

Use a weak chlorine bleach solution [2 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water] as a kitchen sanitizer. You may want to keep a supply of this solution in a spray bottle near the sink.



Dust allergies

Household dust contains many substances that can cause allergies, including animal dander, dust mite residues, molds, and plant pollens.

Room-sized and whole-house air filtration systems can reduce dust levels in your home.

Frequent damp mopping, vacuuming, and dusting are also important dust-control measures.

Healthy home tips on housekeeping

- ✓ Clean and disinfect bathroom toilet bowls and seats, sinks, counters and tubs at least weekly.
- ✓ Disinfect cutting boards. Clean cutting boards in hot, soapy water using a scrub brush to remove food particles and germs that are lodged in the tiny crevices and cuts. Then spray the boards with a weak chlorine bleach solution, rinse, and allow them to air dry.
- ✓ Keep sink disposals and dishwashers free of food debris. Keep counters and tabletops clean. Clean counters and tabletops after they are used for food preparation. A weak bleach solution can be used to sanitize these surfaces.
- ✓ Start each cooking session with a clean dishcloth and towel. Damp sponges and dishcloths can harbor millions of germs. Avoid using sponges in the kitchen and launder dishcloths and towels frequently.
- ✓ Remove trash/rubbish each day to discourage insects and other pests from entering your home.
- ✓ Use disposable paper towels to wipe up juices from raw meat, poultry, or fish.
- ✓ Wipe up spills in the refrigerator immediately.

Healthy home tips for allergy sufferers

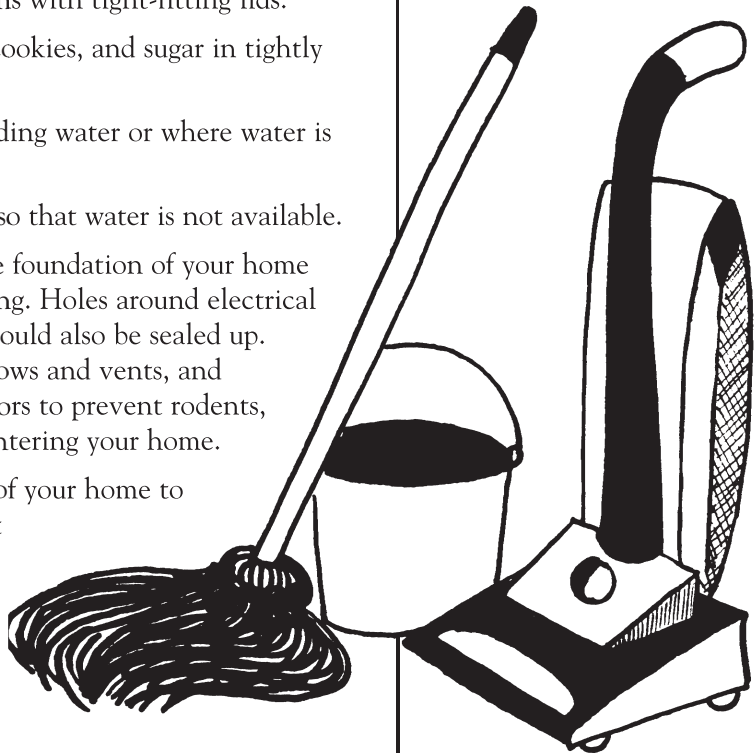
- ✓ Install an air filter on your heating system.
- ✓ Remove draperies, book collections, stuffed animals, and carpets from the bedroom of an allergy sufferer.
- ✓ Use dust-proof mattress and pillow covers.
- ✓ Avoid feather and down-filled pillows and comforters.

Pest control

Insects, mice and other pests enter homes in search of food, water, and shelter. Once inside, they can be a nuisance and may even pose a health hazard. Discourage insects, rodents, and other pests from taking up residence in your home by limiting their access to food and water.

Healthy home tips on pest control

- ✓ Keep countertops clean and wash dishes promptly after meals.
- ✓ Remove trash every day. Store trash outdoors in rodent-proof garbage cans with tight-fitting lids.
- ✓ Keep cereals, crackers, cookies, and sugar in tightly sealed containers.
- ✓ Remove all sites of standing water or where water is likely to puddle.
- ✓ Correct plumbing leaks so that water is not available.
- ✓ Caulk cracks around the foundation of your home and repair damaged siding. Holes around electrical and plumbing outlets should also be sealed up. Use screens on all windows and vents, and tight-fitting external doors to prevent rodents, bats, and insects from entering your home.
- ✓ Lower the temperature of your home to discourage insect/rodent attraction, harborage, and reproduction.
- ✓ Avoid feeding wildlife around your home as it attracts undesirable rodents/insects.



Since most pesticides are toxic and can trigger allergies or asthma attacks, they should be used only as a last resort. Apply pesticides carefully following the directions on the label. If you have a question about the safe use or disposal of a pesticide, contact the manufacturer. A toll-free telephone number and address are usually listed on the product label.