



Dangerous Food Safety Mistakes to avoid

During our constant attempt to stay safe and healthy—a simple mistake in how we handle or prepare food can lead to serious consequences. Just a small number of harmful bacteria, like *Salmonella*, in undercooked food can cause food poisoning. Even tasting food contaminated with *botulism* toxin can lead to paralysis and, in severe cases, could prove fatal.

Let's avoid these commonly found food safety mistakes and significantly reduce the risk of getting sick....

#1: Eating risky foods if you are more likely to get food poisoning

Why: Anyone can get food poisoning. But some are more vulnerable to get sick.

- Elders aged 65 and above or children below 5 years
- People with weakened immune systems (due to health conditions or medications)
- Pregnant women

Solution: Avoid these high-risk foods:

- Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs
- Raw or lightly cooked sprouts
- Unpasteurized milk, juice, or cheese
- Soft cheeses like queso fresco, unless made with pasteurized milk

#2: Not washing hands properly

Why: Dirty hands can transfer germs to food, causing illness.

Solution: Wash hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds. Wash hands before, during, and after preparing food; before eating; after using the toilet or changing a diaper.

#3: Washing Raw meat, Poultry or Eggs

Why: Washing raw meat, chicken, turkey, or eggs can spread germs to the sink, countertops, and other surfaces in the kitchen. These germs can get on other foods, like salads or fruit, and cause illness.

Solution: Don't wash meat, chicken, turkey, or eggs. Cooking them thoroughly to the correct temperature will destroy all harmful germs.

#4: Peeling fruits and vegetables without washing them first

Why: Germs on the outer skin of fruits and vegetables can get transferred to the inside when you cut or peel produce.

Solution: Always rinse fruits and vegetables under running water—even if you plan to peel them. Use a clean brush for firm items like melons, cucumbers, and avocados.

#5: Putting cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat

Why: Fluids from raw meat can contaminate cooked food with harmful bacteria.

Solution: Always use separate plates, utensils, and cutting boards for raw and cooked meat, poultry, and seafood.

#6: Not cooking meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, or eggs thoroughly

Why: Food is safe only after it's been cooked to a high enough temperature to kill germs.

Solution: Use a food thermometer to ensure the food reaches to a safe internal temperature.

- 63°C / 145°F for whole cuts of beef, pork, veal, and lamb (allow to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating)
- 72°C / 160°F for ground meats, such as beef and pork
- 74°C / 165°F for all poultry, including ground chicken and turkey
- 74°C / 165°F for leftovers and casseroles
- 63°C / 145°F for fresh ham (raw)
- 63°C / 145°F for seafood, or cook until flesh is opaque

Tip: If not being served right away, keep it hot (at 60°C / 140°F or above) until served.

#7: Eating raw batter or dough, and other foods with uncooked eggs or uncooked flour

Why: Flour and uncooked eggs may contain E. coli, Salmonella, or other harmful bacteria.

Solution: Cook / bake flour and eggs thoroughly. Avoid foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs, such as runny eggs, or homemade mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, and eggnog. Don't eat raw dough or batter that contains either flour or eggs. Wash hands, work surfaces, and utensils thoroughly after contact with flour and raw dough.

#8: Tasting or smelling food to see if it's still good

Why: You can't taste, smell, or see the germs that cause food poisoning. Even a small bite can make you sick.

Solution: Follow recommended food storage guidelines. If you're unsure how long something has been in the fridge, it's safer to throw it out.

#9: Thawing or marinating food on the counter

Why: Harmful germs can multiply very quickly at room temperature.

Solution: Thaw and marinate food safely in one of these ways:

- In the refrigerator (takes minimum 24 hours)
- In cold water (change water every 30 minutes)
- In the microwave (if cooking immediately)

Always hold marinated food in the refrigerator—never on the counter.

#10: Leaving food out too long before putting it in the fridge

Why: Harmful germs can grow in perishable foods (including meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, eggs, cut fruit, cooked rice, and leftovers) if you leave them out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours, after cooking.

Solution: Refrigerate perishable foods (meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, cooked rice, cut fruits, leftovers) within 2 hours—or within 1 hour if the temperature is above 32°C / 90°F (like in a hot car or outdoor event).

Tip: Divide roasts and large portions of food, such as stew / biriyani, into smaller containers so they will chill quickly. It's acceptable to put warm or hot food into the refrigerator, as long as it's packaged in small amounts that will cool quickly.

* STAY SAFE STAY HEALTHY *

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