

## Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

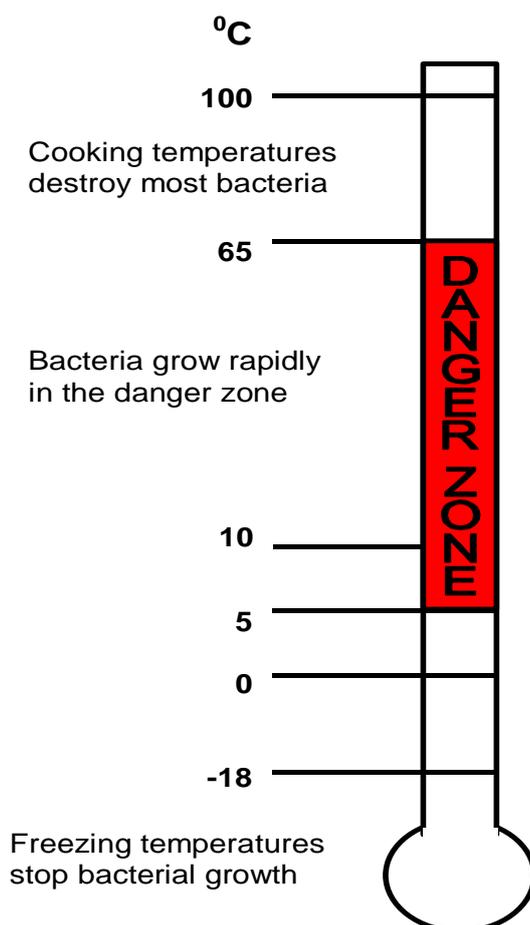
# Food safety

### Introduction

This leaflet is designed to provide you with advice on food safety, from buying and storing your food, to preparation and cooking. It contains specific advice for people who need to take extra care to prevent infections.

### Guidance for food safety

Eating should be a pleasurable experience. However to prevent food poisoning, it is important to take care with your food.



### **Food safety at a glance**

- Check 'Use by' dates. It is recommended to discard food past this date
- Take chilled and frozen foods home quickly and store as directed on labelling
- Thoroughly wash and dry your hands, before food preparation
- Keep your kitchen clean and keep pets away from food, dishes and work surfaces
- Wash fruit, salads and vegetables before eating or before chopping and cooking
- Follow instructions on packaging or from recipes to ensure foods are cooked properly
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold
- Never reheat foods more than once
- Remember food safety advice when eating out and buying takeaways
- If you have an impaired immune system and are susceptible to infection, please follow the extra care advice on page 4

### **Shopping**

- Always check the best before and use by dates. "Use by" dates are labelled on all perishable foods and give a definite date by which to use the food. Throw away any foods not eaten by this date. Smelling or looking at the food is not enough to be sure that the food is safe
- Avoid buying foods with damaged or broken packaging
- Check that chilled cabinets, fridges and freezers are not overloaded as this may mean the food is not cold enough
- Beware of deli counters where raw and cooked meats are stored closely together. Where possible choose pre packed deli items
- Try to buy chilled or frozen foods last, pack them together and take home as soon as possible. If you can, place them in an insulated container or cool bag
- To prevent contamination, ensure raw meat, poultry and fish is well wrapped, and pack separately from other foods

### Home storage

- Follow storage instructions on food packaging and ensure you regularly sort through your fridge and cupboards to check the use by dates
- Your fridge temperature is important. It should be between 0°C and 5°C
- Don't leave the fridge or freezer door open longer than is necessary
- Raw meat, poultry and fish should be placed in a clean, sealed container on the bottom shelf of the fridge, so that it does not touch or drip on to other foods
- Store eggs in the fridge. Throw away any that are broken or cracked. Do not use after the best before date
- When defrosting foods, they should be stored in containers that prevent dripping
- Never refreeze thawed food
- Once opened, canned foods can safely be kept for up to 48 hours in the fridge providing they are emptied into an appropriate covered container
- Avoid overfilling your fridge and freezer as the air may not be circulated optimally and the temperature can increase. You may use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature if you are concerned.

### Around the kitchen

- Wash hands with warm soapy water and dry thoroughly, before touching food or eating, after touching raw meat and poultry, after touching pets or the bin and after going to the toilet
- Wipe hands on a separate clean towel, rather than using the tea towel
- Change kitchen cloths daily, washing them in a hot cycle of the washing machine
- Wash kitchen utensils and dishes in hot soapy water and rinse them before drying; ideally use a dishwasher
- Clean work surfaces with a disinfectant, especially when raw meats and poultry have been prepared
- Cover any cuts and grazes with a waterproof plaster
- Keep pets away from food, dishes and worktops

## Patient Information

- Use a separate chopping board and knife when preparing raw meat, cooked food and salads. If you have to use the same equipment, wash it thoroughly between uses
- Wash fruit and vegetables before eating or before chopping and cooking including leafy salads that are sold as 'washed and ready to use'

## Cooking

- Thorough cooking is very important because it kills harmful bacteria in food. If food is not cooked properly bacteria can survive and this could make you ill
- Frozen food should be completely defrosted before cooking. The best way to thaw foods is in the fridge, or by microwaving. No foods should be refrozen
- Follow recommended cooking instructions on food labels or in cookery books for cooking and defrosting foods
- Preheat the oven to ensure food is cooked at the recommended temperature. Refer to manufacturer's instructions if using microwaves to heat prepared foods
- Ensure food is piping hot before serving. Remember the outside may be well cooked but it is important to check the centre is also cooked
- Meat should be cooked until the juices are clear
- Do not put hot foods into the fridge. Any cooked food should be cooled at room temperature and then chilled, within an hour. Take particular care with meat, poultry, fish and rice
- Left over food needs to be covered and stored in the fridge and used within two days. If you reheat food make sure it is piping hot throughout. Never reheat food more than once
- Do not reheat rice. Always serve rice hot and eat immediately

## Eating out

- It is important to consider the safety of foods eaten away from your home. This includes restaurants, cafes and eating at friends' houses. Particular care should be taken with foods from take-aways and street vendors

## Patient Information

- Try to ensure that the food is prepared to a high standard of food hygiene; do not be afraid to ask for staff hygiene training certificates
- Check if they have a 'Food Hygiene Rating' which will be given by the local council or check ratings.food.gov.uk
- Food should be freshly cooked and when served, hot dishes should be piping hot and cold food should be properly cold
- Avoid salad bars, market stalls and ice cream vendors

## Food poisoning

Common symptoms include stomach ache, fever, vomiting and diarrhoea. If you do get food poisoning take plenty of fluids and rest. You should not prepare or serve food for other people at this time. If these symptoms are severe or persistent please consult with your GP.

## Extra care advice for special groups of people

People who are at greater risk from food poisoning need to take extra care with certain foods. These groups of people include:

- Babies and toddlers
- The elderly
- Pregnant women
- People with a suppressed immune system as a result of illness or medical treatment, for example, if you are having chemotherapy.

## Eggs

- Any eggs should be thoroughly cooked until both yolk and white are solid
- Avoid eating raw egg and uncooked foods made using raw egg. These **homemade** foods may contain raw egg:
  - Béarnaise and Hollandaise sauces
  - Homemade or restaurant-made mayonnaise and some salad dressings (e.g. Caesar salad dressing)
  - Royal icing and soft meringue
  - Homemade ice-cream, mousse, tiramisu and some other desserts
  - Egg Nog and frothy cocktail drinks

## Patient Information

- Most packaged foods in the shops are made with pasteurised egg and should be safe to eat, for example mayonnaise in a jar, ice-cream from a freezer counter.

### **Fish and shellfish**

- Do not eat raw or partially cooked fish and shellfish (e.g. sushi, oysters, caviar)
- Avoid smoked salmon unless eaten directly from a freshly opened packet.

### **Milk and milk products**

- Do not use raw, unpasteurised milk or cream
- Avoid soft cheeses made with unpasteurised milk (e.g. feta, parmesan)
- Avoid homemade/deli paneer and labhar
- Avoid mould-ripened cheeses (e.g. Brie, Camembert, Chevre, goat's cheese)
- Avoid blue veined cheeses (e.g. Stilton or Danish Blue)
- Instead choose hard cheeses such as Cheddar, Red Leicester, Cheshire, or try cottage cheese, processed cheese and spreads
- Avoid probiotic or 'bio' foods, drinks and yoghurts (e.g. Actimel, ProViva, Yakult).

### **Meat & meat products**

- Avoid pâté including vegetable versions
- Take extra care to ensure meat and poultry are thoroughly cooked.

### **Water**

- Water coolers can be a source of infection. Where possible, choose freshly run tap water or carbonated bottled water as an alternative. Take advice if travelling abroad
- Avoid ice when away from home (e.g. in restaurants). Instead have ice made from freshly run tap water.

## Patient Information

### Nuts

- Avoid fresh nuts. Instead choose cooked and roasted nuts, nuts in cans, peanut butter.

### Useful contacts

#### Local dietetic departments:

Coventry Dietitians	024 7696 6161
Nuneaton Dietitians	024 7686 5098
Redditch and Bromsgrove Dietitians	01527 512043
Warwick Dietitians	01926 495321 (extension 4258)

#### NHS Choices – Living Well contains more information on food safety:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/homehygiene/Pages/Homehygienehub.aspx>

This information was produced by Coventry Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust. Contact number: 024 7696 6161.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact us on 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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To give feedback on this leaflet please email: [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

#### Document History

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