



Highlights: Food Safety and You



It is vital to have safe food and water. Food and water that is not safe can have many germs. The germs make people very sick. People can have stomach pain and loose stools. They can have a fever and a headache. Some people can have muscle pain, and brain disorders too. To keep food and water safe from germs use the tips in this fact sheet.



Protect Food from Germs

Some people get food from food co-ops or food banks. All food and water made in the U.S. has a food label. The label lets people know what is in the product. Dates on the product let people know how long they will be safe. Food that is **not** 'pasteurized' is **not safe** to eat. Germs grow in food or water that is not kept safe. How food is handled and stored affects how long it is safe to eat. To stay safe from germs in food or water use these tips.

Do not get food • that looks odd • without a label or a date • if the “eat by” date is old • if it has mold or dirt on it

Never get • cans with leaks, bulges, dents, holes, or rust • boxes with tears, holes, stains, or things inside them such as hair • jars with cracks, chips, loose caps, or seals that bulge

Some foods may not be safe to eat after their “sell by” date. These foods include:

- protein foods such as meat, poultry, fish, and eggs
- sweets with dairy such as eggs, or dry milk powder
- prepared salads and dips
- frozen foods that have thawed

Always look at food labels and the “sell by” or “eat by” date.

Expiration Dates

Read food labels and check the food's “sell by” date. Food in the list below have their own *safety time frame*. **If** the food is safe from germs it can be eaten after the “sell by” date.

- Dairy foods: up to **three days**
- Refrigerated juices: up to **seven days**
- Bread items: up to **ten days**
- Frozen food: up to **three months**
- Crackers, cereals, and cookies: up to **six months**
- Canned food and juice that does not need refrigeration: up to **one year**
- Pasta and rice: Up to **two years**



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Prepare and Store Foods Safely

When you make and store food safely it is easier to stay well. The tips below help people to keep food safe from germs.



- Refrigerate cold and frozen food as soon as possible.

Wash: • raw fruits and vegetables • the top of cans before opening them • food surfaces, utensils, and can opener blades after fixing food • **hands** before you put food away; after you touch raw meat, poultry, or seafood; after you talk on the phone, touch your face, etc.

Cook: • meat, poultry, and shellfish until they are well done • fish until it flakes easily with a fork • eggs until the yolk and white are solid

Do not: • let uncooked meat, poultry, or fish touch other food • eat foods made with raw eggs

Boil: drinking water for one to three minutes

Telephone 888/723-3366 to learn more about food safety. People with access to the Internet may visit the web sites below.

* USDA - Food Safety and Inspection Service
www.fsis.usda.gov

* CDC and Prevention, Food Safety Office
www.cdc.gov/foodsafety

Note: This fact sheet is about food safety. This information is current as of March 2005. It is not medical, fitness, dietetic, or professional advice. Ask a health care provider about the things in this fact sheet.

Food Safety Tips Review

- Choose safe foods. Read food labels. Look for the food's "sell by" or "use by" date.
- Handle and prepare food safely. Keep hands clean.
- Cook hot foods until they are well done. Keep them hot.
- Keep cold foods cold.
- Cover leftovers before you put them in the refrigerator.
- Keep food surface areas clean.
- When in doubt, throw it out!