



Produce Precautions

It used to be that you just had to worry about convincing kids to eat the fruits and vegetables they need to grow healthy and strong. But reports about outbreaks of *E. coli* and salmonella remind us of another concern — making sure fresh produce is safe to eat.

Even with the risk of foodborne illnesses, it's important for kids to eat fruits and vegetables every day to get essential vitamins and nutrients. For example, fruits like oranges provide vitamin C, which helps heal cuts and wounds. Vegetables like broccoli contain dietary fiber, which can help keep cholesterol down and bowel movements regular.

The good news is that it's easy to make sure that the produce you buy and prepare is safe.

From the Store to Your Refrigerator

Regardless of the variety of produce you pick — whether it's bagged or loose, organic or traditionally grown — there's always going to be some chance, however small, that harmful bacteria may have gotten on the food. It can happen anywhere between the fields and your kitchen, during picking, transporting, or packaging.

The safeguards you can take begin when you're selecting produce at the store or produce stand. Be sure to inspect fruits and vegetables before you buy them, and avoid any with visible cuts or broken skin where bacteria could enter.

Also keep these things in mind:

- With prepared produce, such as bagged salad, select only items that are stored on ice or refrigerated. Be sure to check the best-used-by date.
- If your drive home is longer than an hour, consider bringing a cooler or insulated bag in the car to keep any pre-bagged and pre-cut produce fresh.
- At the grocery store, separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from produce and other foods in your shopping cart and grocery bags.

You've probably seen the term "Certified Organic" on USDA labels indicating that a product was grown or made without pesticides, synthetic ingredients, or bioengineering. However, bacterial contamination is possible whether the produce is certified organic or conventionally grown.

Refrigerating and Freezing

To safely store produce, make sure your refrigerator and freezer are cold enough to keep it fresh and prevent any bacteria in it from thriving. Keep your refrigerator set between 32°F (0°C) and 40°F (5°C) and your freezer to 0°F (-18°C) or lower. If they don't have thermostats, consider buying one for each.

Properly Preparing Produce

When you prepare fresh produce, these steps will help ensure that it's safe to eat:

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from produce and ready-to-eat foods.
- Wash utensils and surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after using them in food preparation.
- Scrub all fruits and vegetables with plain water (even if you plan to peel them) to remove any pesticide residue or dirt that could contain bacteria.
- Wash melons, particularly cantaloupes and watermelons, before eating to avoid carrying bacteria from the rind to the knife to the inside of the fruit.

- Many types of bagged lettuce are pre-washed (the packaging will say if it is). Even though the produce has been washed before bagging, you still should wash it again right before you eat it.
- Dry produce with a paper towel or clean towel to help reduce bacteria.
- Discard the outer leaves of leafy greens, such as spinach or lettuce.
- Refrigerate all cut and peeled produce.
- Thoroughly wash cutting boards with hot, soapy water after each use. Consider using separate boards for meat and produce. Replace worn plastic or wooden cutting boards with hard-to-clean grooves that can harbor germs.

Though commercial produce washes are available, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not recommend washing produce with them. Following the recommendations above and washing your hands, dishes, utensils, and the surfaces in your kitchen should work just fine. Periodically sanitizing cutting boards and kitchen surfaces can offer added protection.

Rest assured that while fresh produce, meat, and fish do carry some contamination risk, with the proper precautions you can reduce that risk and enjoy them safely.

Reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD
Date reviewed: July 2015

Note: All information on KidsHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

© 1995-2020 The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.

Images provided by The Nemours Foundation, iStock, Getty Images, Veer, Shutterstock, and Clipart.com.

Produce Precautions

Post Test – August 2020

**Please keep this test and certificate in your files for Licensing.
You do not need to send it in to our office or the State.**

1. Reports about outbreaks of _____ and _____ remind us we should be concerned with making sure fresh produce is safe to eat.
2. Fruits like oranges provide _____ which helps heal cuts and wounds.
3. Be sure to inspect fruits and vegetables before you buy them and avoid any with visible cuts or broken skin where _____ could enter.
4. At the grocery store, _____ raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from _____ and other foods in your cart and bags.
5. Bacterial contamination is not possible if the produce is certified organic.
True or False?
6. Keep your refrigerator set between ____°F and _____°F and your freezer to 0°F or lower.
7. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.
True or False?
8. Wash melons, particularly _____ and _____ before eating to avoid carrying bacteria from the rind to the knife to the inside of the fruit.
9. Thoroughly wash _____ with hot, soapy water after each use.
10. While fresh produce, meat and fish do carry some _____ risk, with the proper precautions you can reduce that risk and enjoy them safely.

July 2020 Quiz Answers. 1.Preferences 2. 3% 3.False 4.Unregulated
5.Sodium/Sugar 6.True 7.Zones 8.Schools 9.Manipulated 10.Negative



Southwest Human Development Services
P.O. Box 28487 • Austin, Texas 78755-8487
(512) 467-7916 • Toll Free (800) 369-9082
Fax (512) 467-1453 • Toll Free (888) 467-1455
www.swhuman.org

SOUTHWEST HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Sponsor of the

USDA CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

is pleased to award

THIS CERTIFICATE

for completion of 30 minutes of training in

August 2020: Produce Precautions

A SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL COURSE

(Quiz on reverse side must be completed for certificate to be valid)

This Family Day Care Provider supports the commitment to
Quality Child Care as demonstrated by completion of this course

Given this date _____

Elizabeth Curtis
Training Coordinator
Southwest Human Development Services