



Food Safety: Fruits & Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are important parts of a healthy diet. But reports about outbreaks of *E. coli* and salmonella are reminders to make sure that fresh produce is safe to eat. These tips can help.

What to Look for When Buying Produce

No matter what produce you pick — bagged or loose, organic or traditionally grown — there's always going to be a small chance that harmful bacteria may have gotten on it. This can happen anywhere between the fields and your kitchen, during picking, transporting, or packaging.

Be sure to inspect fruits and vegetables before you buy them. Don't buy 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 that show a product was grown or made without pesticides, synthetic ingredients, or bioengineering. But bacterial contamination can still happen whether produce is certified organic or conventionally grown.

Refrigerating Fresh Produce

To safely store produce, your refrigerator and freezer must be cold enough to keep it fresh and prevent any bacteria from thriving. Keep your refrigerator set between 32°F (0°C) and 40°F (5°C). Use a refrigerator thermometer to check the temperature. If you cook produce, the heat will kill any bacteria.

Safely Preparing Fruits & Veggies

When preparing fresh produce, these steps will help keep it safe to eat:

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds 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 dirt and bacteria.
- Wash melons, like cantaloupes and watermelons, before cutting to avoid carrying bacteria from the rind to the knife to the inside of the fruit.
- Rinse bagged lettuce even if the packaging says it was pre-washed.
- Dry produce with a paper towel or clean cloth towel to help remove bacteria.
- Refrigerate all cut and peeled produce.
- Wash cutting boards with hot, soapy water after each use. Use separate boards for meat and produce. Replace worn plastic or wooden cutting boards with hard-to-clean grooves that can harbor germs.

You might see produce washes for sale, but you don't need them. Just follow these precautions to help prevent

foodborne illnesses, and your family can enjoy fresh produce safely.

Reviewed by: Mary L. Gavin, MD

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Post Test – June 2022

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1. No matter what produce you pick – bagged or loose, organic or traditionally grown – there's always going to be a small chance that harmful _____ may have gotten on it.
2. Don't buy any fruits or vegetables with _____ cuts or _____ skin where bacteria could enter.
3. If your drive home is longer than an hour, bring a cooler or insulated bag in the car to keep any pre-bagged and pre-cut produce fresh.
True or False?
4. At the grocery store, _____ raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from produce and other fresh food in your cart or bags.
5. Bacterial contamination can still happen whether produce is certified _____ or conventionally grown.
6. Keep your refrigerator set between _____ ° and _____ °.
7. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 5 minutes before preparing or eating food.
True or False?
8. Wash _____, like cantaloupes and watermelons, before cutting to avoid carrying bacteria from the rind to the knife to the inside of the fruit.
9. _____ produce with a paper towel or clean cloth to help remove bacteria.
10. Wash _____ with hot soapy water after each use.
Use separate boards for meat and produce.

May 2022 Quiz Answers. 1.1/3 2.Safety Precautions 3.False 4.Motor Skills
5.Touch 6.Imagination 7.Tactile 8.False 9.Supervise 10.Examine



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Given this date _____

Elizabeth Curtis
Training Coordinator
Southwest Human Development Services