

# Food and Safety Quality



## Handling Eggs and Poultry Safely at Home

*Originally written by  
H. Charles Goan, Dean Emeritus  
Revised by Kelly R. Robbins,  
Professor*

**F**ood safety should be an important issue for everyone. Our food supply is the safest in the world, yet there are times when individuals or groups may have stomach cramps, diarrhea, headaches, fever or vomiting after a meal. These symptoms can be caused by a flu virus or a possible case of food-borne illness.

Our food supply is not 100 percent safe and never will be. However, consumers play a major role in minimizing the risk of food-borne illness.

### Eggs

While the risk of contracting food-borne illness from raw or undercooked eggs is extremely small, eggs are a perishable product and should be treated as such. As with any other perishable food product, proper storage and cooking of eggs are necessary to prevent the growth of potentially harmful bacteria. Consumers should continue to follow safe food handling practices when preparing eggs.

### Tips for Handling and Cooking Eggs

- At the food market, buy Grade AA or A eggs only from refrigerated display cases.
- As soon as possible after purchase, get the eggs home and put them in the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate eggs at home in their original carton as soon as possible, at a temperature no higher than 40 F. Do not wash eggs before storage or use. Washing is a routine part of

commercial egg processing and rewashing is unnecessary.

- Use raw shell eggs within five weeks and hard-cooked eggs (in the shell or peeled) within one week. Use leftover yolks and whites within four days.
- Use only clean, unbroken eggs.
- Avoid keeping eggs out of the refrigerator for more than two hours, including time for preparing and serving (but not cooking). If you hide hard-cooked eggs for an egg hunt, follow the two-hour rule or do not eat the eggs.
- Cook eggs thoroughly until the yolk begins to thicken and the white is firm to kill any bacteria that may be present.
- Avoid eating raw eggs and foods containing raw eggs: homemade products such as eggnog, ice cream, Caesar salad and Hollandaise sauce, for example.
- Egg dishes for those who are very young, elderly, pregnant or ill should be thoroughly cooked.
- Dirty or leaking eggs should not be used.

- Do not leave broken-out eggs or egg dishes at room temperature more than one hour.
- As the egg shell is being broken, try to keep small pieces of the egg shell from falling into the egg yolk and white.

## Poultry

Poultry meat is a safe, low-fat, economical food. Foods such as chicken and turkey can serve as a carrier for bacteria that do cause food-borne illness. Proper cooking will kill any harmful bacteria that may be on poultry.

In most cases, food-borne illness is caused by careless food handling in the kitchen. Cross-contamination (bacteria transferred from one food to another) is a major problem. However, good food handling practices will help to reduce cross-contamination problems.

## Tips for Handling and Cooking Poultry

- When purchasing poultry, do not allow raw meat juices to drip on other foods.
- After purchase, get the poultry home immediately and put it in the refrigerator or freezer. Store the meat on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to prevent raw juices from contaminating other foods.

- Keep all poultry refrigerated or frozen until ready for preparation. Cook raw poultry within a couple days after purchase. Do not store raw poultry in the refrigerator for more than one to two days. If you are going to freeze raw poultry, freeze promptly on return from purchasing it. Thaw poultry meat only in the refrigerator or microwave.
- It is no longer recommended that you rinse raw poultry before cooking. Rinse water splashed around the sink, on the counter and on prepared foods creates a contamination risk. Properly cooking poultry will destroy any bacteria.
- Do not place cooked poultry on an unwashed platter used to carry raw chicken to the barbecue grill.
- Cook whole chicken and turkey, bone-in parts and boneless parts to 165 F. For whole chicken and turkey, measure the internal temperature using a meat thermometer placed in the thickest part of the thigh.
- Never partially cook meat and finish cooking it later.
- After serving, refrigerate leftover poultry immediately or within two hours after cooking. Cooked poultry meat may be stored refrigerated up to three days.

## General Food Handling Tips

- Always wash your hands with soap and water before preparing food.
- Use only clean equipment, utensils, countertops and cutting boards when preparing food.
- Prevent cross contamination in the kitchen. Use separate preparation surfaces and equipment when preparing different foods.
- Use an acrylic cutting board for meat because bacteria can survive in the crevices in a wooden cutting board.
- Keep hot foods above 140 F.
- Keep cold foods below 40 F.
- Avoid recontamination of cooked poultry and egg products.
- Promptly refrigerate the uneaten cooked poultry and egg products.

*Good food handling and food preparation practices play an important role in helping to minimize food-borne illness.*

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