



Food safety at home

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The federal government recently sent out flyers

reminding people that food safety in the home is pretty

important for good health. We could not agree more so thought it a good time to remind ourselves what food safety means, and what we can do to ensure the safety of our families.

Remembering what to do is really quite simple as there are only four easy-to-remember steps: clean, separate, cook and chill. Remember that and you will be on your way to food safety.

Staying clean is critically important to preventing foodborne illness. Bacteria readily spread throughout the kitchen so before and after preparing or handling each type of food, wash your hands, cutting surfaces and tools, and counters using warm, soapy water.

Keeping different foods separate is also important. This is especially true of foods that will not be cooked. For example, you are making a cold salad topped with sliced, hot chicken strips. Make sure there is no cross-contamination of the salad ingredients with the uncooked chicken. Keep raw meats, poultry and seafood separate from each other, and from other foods.

Cooking will usually destroy any bacteria that remains on the food. Whether this happens depends of food being thoroughly cooked and we know that only from temperature. You cannot guess at 'fully cooked' — a digital food thermometer is the solution. The internal temperature of your food will tell you if it is cooked. Taken at the centre of the portion, pieces of beef, veal and lamb need to be at least 63°C or 145°F to be cooked (that's medium rare). Pieces of pork,

ground meats and sausage should be cooked to 71°C. And poultry needs to be cooked to 74°C to be safe.

Hard to remember all those temperatures? Would a free fridge magnet help? Contact the government of Canada at 1-800-622-6232 to get yours.

Step four in your food safety efforts needs to be proper chilling after the meal. Bacteria especially love room temperature. To prevent their growth in leftovers, put food into the refrigerator as soon as possible, and definitely before two hours after the meal.

Feel safe yet? If you have been following the four key stages to food safety, you are well on the way to preventing foodborne illness. There is more you can do: How about hand washing? Exactly!

Hand washing is a critical step in keeping foods safe. It is no use washing the cutting board perfectly if your hands are the transfer point for bacteria. Proper hand washing uses soap and warm water to dissolve natural oils and bacteria from the skin. Use liquid soap and build a good lather well beyond the wrist. Use a rotary motion to generate friction and pay particular attention to areas between fingers and the fingernails. Rinse thoroughly with running water downward from the arm towards the fingers. Dry off using single use paper towel.

Feel safer now? You should as you are well on your way to being food safe. Want to know more? Visit www.befoodsafe.ca for more details and tips for consumers. The FoodSafe program is another good place to learn, particularly for food industry workers. Local courses are always available, or visit www.foodsafe.ca online.

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