Food safety

Every year Australians suffer about 4.1 million food related cases of gastroenteritis – that's more than 11 000 cases a day! Those illnesses cause about 80 deaths a year.

Follow these four tips to prevent food poisoning

Clean

- Wash your hands with warm soapy water before handling food and after touching raw food such as eggs and meat.
- Thoroughly wash and dry chopping boards, utensils and work benches before use.
- Wash fresh fruit and vegetables under running water before using or eating them.

Cook

- Defrost food in the fridge overnight or in a microwave just prior to cooking – this is safer than defrosting food at room temperature (for example, on the kitchen bench).

- Cook poultry, pork, rolled roasts, minced meat and sausages until the centre of the thickest part reaches 75°C. Cook eggs until they are no longer runny.
- Reheat leftovers until steaming hot (60°C) before eating. If using a microwave be sure to stir regularly to heat evenly.

Chill

- Food poisoning bacteria can grow in food that is kept between five and 60 degrees Celsius.
- Make sure perishable foods such as meat, fish, cheese and milk are kept in the fridge and used as soon as possible.
- Put hot food in the fridge as soon as it stops steaming – don't let it cool to room temperature on the bench.
- Use meat, chicken or fresh fish within one or two days, otherwise freeze it. If in doubt, throw it out.
- For leftovers, keep in the fridge for a few days at most, otherwise freeze and reheat when needed.

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Separate

To stop bacteria on raw foods from spoiling ready to eat food:

- store raw meat, chicken or fish in sealed containers at the bottom of your fridge, away from ready to eat foods and vegetables
- wash your hands after handling raw food
- use separate utensils, cutting boards and serving platters for raw and cooked food.

Tips for buying safe foods

- Check the 'best before' and 'use by dates' before you purchase food. Products should not be eaten or sold past their 'use by' date. Products can be eaten after their 'best before' date but may have reduced quality after this date.
- Do not buy food in damaged containers – especially canned foods. Do not store food in opened cans. Transfer to a sealable non-metal container after opening.
- Do not buy cracked or dirty eggs. Ask for an exchange if you notice this at the checkout.
- Buy cold or hot foods last, and get them home fast. It can help to have an esky or insulated bag in your car to transport these items.