

News column for use week of September 5, 2022
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September 1, 2022

September is National Food Safety Education Month

In light of Food Safety Education Month, I wanted to share these myth-busters from the Partnership for Food Safety Education. They have many resources on their website, fightbac.org, including webinars, infographics, recipes, and even school curriculum. They cover food safety and foodborne illness and have materials in both English and Spanish. Check out fightbac.org!

Myth: If there is a recalled food item in my refrigerator, all I need to do is throw out the food.

Fact: Germs in the recalled item could spread in your fridge. Throw away the recalled item and any food stored with it. Clean the entire fridge with hot, soapy water. Then sanitize the fridge using a solution of 1 Tablespoon of unscented liquid chlorine bleach and one-gallon water. Air dry or pat dry with clean paper towels.

Myth: I don't need to wash my fresh produce if the skin or rind will be removed.

Fact: Harmful bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside during cutting or peeling. Gently rub fruits and vegetables under cold running water just before eating, even if you plan to cut or peel them. Firm-skinned fruits and vegetables should be scrubbed with a clean brush under running water. Dry fresh produce with a clean paper towel.

Myth: There's no harm in rinsing bagged greens and packaged salads for extra safety.

Fact: Rinsing ready-to-eat greens could increase the potential for cross-contamination. Pathogens that may be on your hands or kitchen surfaces could contaminate your greens and salad. Ready-to-eat greens and salads have been commercially prepared with your safety and convenience in mind. If the package label says 'ready-to-eat,' 'triple washed,' or 'no washing necessary,' you don't need to wash them again.

Myth: The 'slime' or 'goo' on my raw chicken needs to be rinsed off before cooking.

Fact: Rinsing raw chicken can spread harmful bacteria around your kitchen and onto ready-to-eat foods. The 'slime' or 'goo' on the outside of raw chicken will go away during the cooking process. Poultry should be cooked until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees on a food thermometer.

Myth: Rinsing raw chicken with water will remove bacteria like *Salmonella*.

Fact: Rinsing raw chicken will not remove bacteria. In fact, it can spread harmful bacteria around your sink, onto your countertops, and onto ready-to-eat foods. To kill harmful bacteria, poultry should be cooked until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees on a food thermometer.

Myth: Freezing foods kills harmful bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

Fact: Bacteria can survive freezing temperatures. Cooking food to a safe internal temperature using a food thermometer is the best way to kill harmful bacteria.

Myth: I use bleach and water to sanitize my countertops. If I use more bleach, more bacteria will be killed.

Fact: There is no advantage to using more bleach. Use a solution of 1 Tablespoon unscented liquid chlorine bleach and 1 gallon of water. Apply to surfaces and allow to stand for several minutes. Air dry or pat dry with clean paper towels. The leftover sanitizing solution can be tightly covered and stored for up to one week.

Myth: My food is safe to eat because I cooked it in the microwave, which kills harmful bacteria.

Fact: Microwave ovens will kill bacteria when food is heated to a safe internal temperature. Microwaves can cook unevenly because food may be shaped irregularly or vary in thickness, leaving cold spots in food where harmful bacteria can survive. Always follow package directions that advise a 'standing time' or rotating and stirring food. Know your microwave's wattage and use a food thermometer to ensure food has reached a safe internal temperature.

Source: <https://www.fightbac.org/food-safety-mythbusters/>

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