








Food Safety for Everyone

Anyone can become a victim of food poisoning. The Health Protection Branch of Health and Welfare Canada estimates that there may be as many as 2.2 million cases of food-borne illness each year. The main causes of food poisoning are salmonella and other food-borne pathogens; the most common symptoms are stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In severe cases, hospitalization may be required. With infants, the chronically ill or the elderly, food poisoning may be fatal.

Hot temperatures usually kill bacteria, while cold temperatures prevent them from multiplying. Temperatures between 4°C and 60°C are within the DANGER ZONE; within this range, bacteria can easily survive and multiply in foods. Therefore, potentially unsafe foods should never be kept at normal room temperature (20°-22°C) for more than two hours. Cold foods should always be kept refrigerated at 4°C or below and hot foods should be kept piping hot at 60°C or above. The following list of common foods may become unsafe if they are not properly handled or stored:

	meat, poultry and fish		processed meats (such as bologna, hot dogs and ham)
	cooked vegetables, peas and beans		gravies
	cooked rice		meat sandwich spreads
	custards, puddings and whipped cream		all canned food (after opening)
	milk and milk products (except hard cheese)		eggs, egg products (except dehydrated eggs) and egg salad
	shellfish		soft cheeses
	dressings		
			

Tips for keeping food safe

- Refrigerate or freeze meat and poultry as soon as possible.
- Ensure that meat and poultry are thoroughly thawed before cooking. Preferably thaw meat in the refrigerator or microwave oven, and not at room temperature.
- As a general rule, cook meat until the juices are no longer pink. Hamburger and other ground meats, poultry and rolled roasts must be thoroughly cooked to the centre.
- Do not allow cooked foods to touch uncooked foods. When transporting cooked meat from the barbecue to the table, do not use the same plate the raw meat was placed on. Do not use the same utensils that have been in contact with raw meat unless they have been washed and sanitized.
- Wash hands before and after handling raw meat and poultry.
- Wash dishes, cutting boards, and counters with hot, soapy water and diluted bleach after they have been used for preparing raw meats, poultry and fish.
- Hard cheese with a patch of mould on it may still be eaten provided that all the mould is cut away.
- Cool large quantities of food quickly and reduce the risk of bacterial growth by dividing food into several small containers.
- Never use any food that comes from a bulging can, is mouldy, has a gas build-up or a bad odour.