

Five keys to safer food



Keep clean

- ✓ Wash your hands before handling food and often during food preparation
- ✓ Wash your hands with soap after going to the toilet
- ✓ Wash and sanitize all surfaces and equipment used for food preparation
- ✓ Protect kitchen areas and food from insects, pests and other animals

Why?

There are useful and harmful microorganisms. Many harmful microorganisms easily multiply in soil, water, animals and people, reaching dangerous numbers for human health. However, they are invisibly small while carried on hands, wiping cloths and kitchen utensils, especially cutting boards. The slightest contact can transfer them to food, and cause diseases among those who eat the food. Such diseases often start with a paining or running stomach but can become worse.



Buy safe raw materials and keep them separate from cooked food

- ✓ Select only fresh and wholesome food from a trusted seller
- ✓ Do not use food beyond its expiry date
- ✓ Choose food which was safely processed and/or kept continuously cool
- ✓ Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other food, by using separate containers and utensils such as knives and cutting boards

Why?

Raw food, for example meat, poultry and seafood can contain more dangerous microorganisms than especially cooked, smoked or grilled food. These microorganisms should not be transferred to other food during food preparation and storage. Also toxic chemicals may be formed in older, damaged or mouldy foods; this food will not become safe by cooking and has to be thrown away.

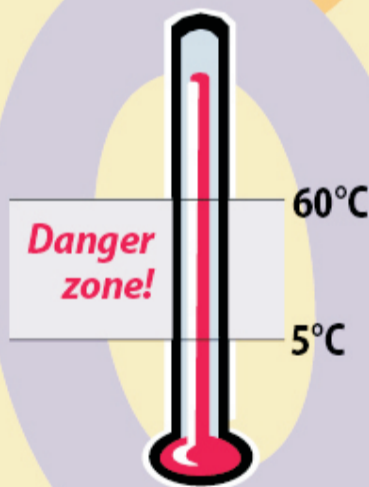


Cook thoroughly

- ✓ Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood
- ✓ Bring food like soups and stews to boiling. For meat and poultry, make sure that juices are clear, not pink.
- ✓ Reheat cooked food thoroughly if it cooled down after the last serving

Why?

Only proper cooking (not just warming) kills all dangerous microorganisms. The water temperature should reach at least 70 degrees Celsius which is really hot although below the boiling point of water. Food which can spoil very easily is for example minced meats, rolled roasts, large joints of meat and whole poultry. This food needs special caution.



Keep food at safe temperatures

- ✓ Do not leave cooked food at room temperature for more than 2 hours to prevent the growth of new microorganism. Always reheat food kept this way before eating
- ✓ For storage refrigerate promptly all cooked and perishable foods (preferably below 5 degrees Celsius)
- ✓ Keep cooked food piping hot prior to serving.
- ✓ Do not store food too long even in the refrigerator.

Why?

Microorganisms can multiply very quickly if (even previously cooked) food is stored at room temperature. By holding it at temperatures below 5 degrees Celsius (in a fridge), the growth of microorganisms is slowed down or stopped, although they are not dead. As soon as the food is taken from the fridge they start multiplying again and faster.



Use safe water and wash food the right way

- ✓ Use one tablet of chlorine (for example "foodsaf"™ tablets) in 5 liters of water.
- ✓ Or use a knife tip or one small tablet of the purple 'potassium permanganate' (ask your Pharmacist) in 5 liters of water.
- ✓ Or use a tea spoon of "Eau de javel" (bleach) in 5 liters of water.
- ✓ Or use one part of vinegar in 5 parts of clean water.
- ✓ After soaking the vegetables for 5-10 minutes with any of the above, rinse them in a second bowl with safe water. Change the solutions after about 25 heads of lettuce.

Why?

In Africa, vegetables are often irrigated with polluted water and can contain a dangerous amount of microorganisms on their surface. While some vegetables can be cooked to kill microorganisms, others like salad - are eaten raw and require thorough washing or peeling. For washing, many people use salt or vinegar, but often at too low concentrations which will not kill the harmful microorganisms. Follow the options given here.