# Food Safety and Cross Contamination

Congratulations, you made a great choice for you and your family by buying healthy, nutritious food! Now the only thing you have to do is keep it that way. Even healthy foods can damage your body if not handled correctly. Foods contain microorganisms, which under certain conditions, can replicate and lead to food borne illness when consumed. Common symptoms of most food borne illnesses include: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, body aches, dehydration and more. Luckily there are easy steps you can take to avoid them all.

1. Maintain Good Personal Hygiene
- Wash hands in hot, soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling any food
- Do not cough or sneeze near food prep area or into your hands
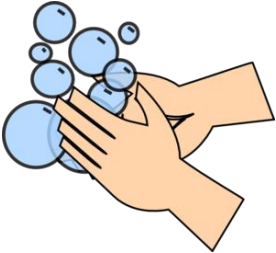
2. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Pathogens are most likely to grow between the temperatures of 5° and 57° C. This is known as the *temperature danger zone*. Limiting the amount of time foods spend in this danger zone is vital to preventing food poisoning. Keep your foods in the **safe zone** by following the tips listed below:

- Store hot foods above 57° Celsius and cold foods below 5° Celsius.
- Thaw food safely using one of the following methods:

    1. *Place food in refrigerator at 5ºC or lower until thawed.*
    2. *Place food under drinkable, running water until thaw.*
    3. *Use the microwave only if food will be cooked immediately.*
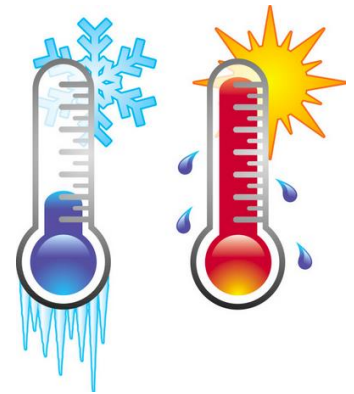
Meat	° C
Poultry	74°
Stuffed meat	74°
Ground meats	68°
Injected meats	68°
Pork, beef, veal, and lamb	63°
Fish	63°
Shell eggs	63°
Reheating leftovers	74°

Cool cooked leftovers as quickly as possible; try to get food to 5° within four hours. Divide food into shallow pans and place in refrigerator to speed up the cooling process.

Cook foods to the proper temperature – different foods require different cooking temperatures be met in order to destroy potential pathogens. If available, use a meat thermometer to guarantee no pathogens survive the cooking process. See the chart to know how hot is too hot for pathogens and just right for our health.

3. Avoid Cross contamination. Cross contamination occurs when microorganisms found naturally in one food are transferred to another. This can happen while transporting, storing, or preparing food. If not avoided, it can result in the rapid growth of pathogens and food poisoning. Cross contamination most commonly occurs when bacteria from raw meat, which is usually destroyed during the cooking process, comes into contact with foods that are eaten raw. Some tips for avoiding cross-contamination are listed below.

- Separate meats from foods that are eaten raw during shopping, cooking, and storing
- Keep raw meats below fresh foods in the refrigerator so the juices do not leak onto them
- Use hot water and soap to wash and a bleach dilution to sanitize all knives, cutting boards, counters, and equipment that had contact with raw meat
- Use hot soapy water and a clean dishcloth or paper towel to clean countertops
- Use different knives and cutting boards when chopping raw meat and vegetables or clean and sanitize between uses
- Wash your hands using soap and warm water for 20 seconds between handling raw meat and produce
- Place cooked food on a clean plate, not one that has contacted raw meat
- Wash all raw produce before eating
- Don't use utensils that have touched raw meat on cooked meat or any food that is ready for consumption