

QUICK FACTS: OLDER ADULTS

A lot has changed since 1950.

Many people used to prepare and eat their food at home, but today nearly half of the money spent on food is paid to others for “take out” and restaurant meals. Giving up some control in the preparation and content of our meals means we have to be more vigilant in our choices.

As we age, our bodies change. From decreased stomach acid, which is the body’s natural defense from foodborne bacteria, to a slower responding immune system, and an increase in illnesses like cancer or pneumonia, older adults face a greater vulnerability to foodborne illness. Federal studies show that older adults do a better job of handling food safely than any other age group. However, we believe the old adage still holds true, that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

Listeria, Salmonella, and E. coli are just some of the pathogens involved in foodborne illness, which often presents itself with flu-like symptoms: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever. The following guidelines are for eating out as well as eating at home.



No matter where you eat, meat, poultry, fish, and eggs must be cooked to a safe internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

Is It Ready? Don't Guess – Use a Thermometer

- Whole cuts of meat, including pork - 145°F and let rest for 3 min
- Fish and shellfish – 145° F and flakes with a fork
- Burgers, sausage, and ground meat (except poultry) - 160°F
- Chicken and poultry (including ground) - 165°F
- Egg dishes - 165°F
- Leftovers – heat to 165°F
- Sauces, soups, and gravies – bring to a boil

Avoid Cross Contamination

- Wash hands with soap and warm running water, scrubbing for 20 seconds, and drying hands with a paper or cloth towel.
- Wash produce. Rinse fruits and vegetables, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten.
- Use one set of cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and a completely different second set for produce.
- Cutting boards and countertops, where raw meat, poultry, and fish have been prepared must be sanitized with disinfectant.



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Hotdogs, Deli-style Meats, and More

- Listeria is a virulent bacteria often found in ready-to-eat foods such as hotdogs, lunchmeat, cold cuts, and other deli-style meat and poultry, as well as uncooked vegetables, unpasteurized milk and milk products, and processed foods. It is killed by pasteurization and cooking.
- Heat hotdogs and deli meats until steaming hot or **165°F**.
- Deli-meat style sandwiches in restaurants should be ordered hot (like grilled panini). If you cannot heat it, do not eat it.

The Raw Facts

- When buying smoothies, ask the barista if they use pasteurized juice. If they say no or don't know, it's best to skip it.
- Check the label! Raw (unpasteurized) juices and ciders can contain harmful bacteria, but should be easier to avoid because warning labels on juices are required by law.

Ditching Raw Dairy

- Avoid raw milk and raw milk products such as yogurt, ice cream, cheeses, etc.
- Soft cheeses such as feta, brie and queso fresco are often unpasteurized. Be sure to check the label, or ask the server.
- Salmonella grows both inside and outside eggs. Pasteurized eggs or egg products are best.
- Don't use recipes with raw or partially cooked eggs (avoid soft-boiled or over-easy), unless the eggs have been pasteurized.



CAUTION

Skipping Raw Fish

- Vibrio, which is most often found in raw seafood (like oysters, shellfish, and scallops) is particularly harmful for those over 65.
- People who are immunocompromised or have liver disease are especially prone to vibrio illnesses. Sometimes fatally.

SKIP



When You're Shopping

- For meat and poultry, check the date and color of the food. Fresh beef is a bright, cherry-red color. Pork is light pink. Poultry shouldn't have any discoloration.
- Put raw meat and poultry in plastic bags from the produce department to prevent juices from leaking on other foods.
- At checkout, bag raw meat and poultry separate from any other foods.
- Don't let meat/poultry sit in your car after you're done at the store. Make grocery shopping your last stop while out or pack your meats in a cooler with ice.



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