

Food Safety Mythbusters

Food Safety Myths

What You Think You Know Can Hurt You



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Myth vs. Message

- **Myths**
 - May be traditional
 - May have just enough science or “good sense” to be believable
 - Frequently travel quickly through informal media
- **Evidence-based messages**
 - Tested for accuracy of science and delivery
 - Tell both the “how” and the “why”
 - Fact-based instead of intuitive

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QUIZ #1


When sanitizing a kitchen counter to kill harmful bacteria, it's best to use a solution of water and unscented liquid bleach, mixed in what proportions?

- a) 1 tablespoon unscented liquid bleach to 1 gallon water.
- b) 1 cup unscented liquid bleach to 1 gallon water.
- c) Unless raw meat juices have been on your countertop, it isn't necessary to use anything more than plain water and a little liquid detergent.
- d) Use your own judgment about how much bleach to use by following the guideline that more bleach means more bacteria will be killed.

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Myth 1

I use bleach and water to sanitize my countertops, and the more bleach I use the more bacteria I kill.



- Why is this a myth?

There is no advantage to using more bleach than recommended. Use just 1 tablespoon per gallon of water.

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Message 1

To sanitize a nonporous surface, use 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water.

Flood surface with solution, allow to sit for 2 minutes or longer, pat dry with clean paper towels or allow to air dry.

Leftover sanitizing solution is effective for a week, if tightly covered.

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Myth 2

Lemon juice and salt will clean and sanitize a cutting board.

What makes this a myth?

Lemon juice and salt will not reliably sanitize a surface.



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Message 2

To clean and sanitize your cutting board, first wash it with hot water and soap.

Then sanitize it by using a diluted chlorine bleach solution of 1 tablespoon per gallon of water.



Fight BAC!

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QUIZ #2

You took an apple out of the refrigerator and you plan to peel it. What should you do next?

- a) With a clean, sharp knife, carefully cut away the peel.
- b) Get out a clean plate to put the apple on after it's peeled.
- c) Wash the apple with the skin on under running tap water before peeling it.
- d) Decide if you have enough apples to make a pie. If so, begin rolling out pie crust.

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Myth 3

I don't need to wash my produce if I am going to peel it.



What makes this a myth?

Harmful bacteria could be on the outside of the produce. If you peel or cut produce without first washing it, the bacteria could be transferred to the part that you eat.

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Message 3

Wash fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water just before eating, cutting or cooking.

Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables; these products are not intended for consumption.

Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat", "washed", or "triple washed" need not be washed, if they are used straight from the package.

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Myth 4

Putting chicken in a colander and rinsing it with water will remove bacteria like *Salmonella*.

What makes this a myth?

There is no way to rinse away all bacteria on poultry.

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Message 4

Rinsing raw poultry is not a safety step and can cause cross-contamination.

Bacteria in poultry are inactivated when the poultry is cooked to a safe internal temperature (165 °F).

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Myth 5

Once a hamburger turns brown in the middle it is cooked.

What makes this a myth?

Visual cues are inaccurate guidelines in determining whether hamburger is cooked to a safe internal temperature.

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Message 5

The ONLY way to know that hamburger has been cooked to a safe internal temperature is to use a food thermometer.

Ground beef should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 160 °F, as measured by a food thermometer.



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QUIZ #3

Why do package directions on microwaveable foods include a stand time? (For example, "Cook in microwave on high for 4 – 6 minutes. Let stand for 2 minutes.")

- a) The stand time is so the food can cool a bit and you don't burn yourself.
- b) The stand time is so you'll have time to set the table before eating.
- c) The stand time lets the heat evenly distribute throughout any cold spots left by the microwave, so that bacteria can be killed.
- d) The stand time is just a suggestion for people who have older microwaves that might not heat as evenly as newer models.

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Myth 6

The stand time recommended for microwaveable foods is optional. It's just so you don't burn yourself.

What makes this a myth?

The stand time is required as part of the cooking time because it allows heat to be conducted throughout the product.

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Message 6

Read and follow package instructions.

Use a thermometer to ensure that food has reached a safe internal temperature.



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QUIZ #4

If refrigerated leftovers don't have a bad smell ...

- a) They still may not be OK to eat because many harmful bacteria that can cause foodborne illness don't make food smell.
- b) The leftovers are OK to eat, cold or hot.
- c) Reheat until warm.
- d) The leftovers are OK to eat as long as you have a strong stomach.

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Myth 7

Leftovers are safe to eat until they smell bad.

What makes this a myth?

The types of bacteria (and parasites and viruses) that cause illness do not affect the taste, smell, or appearance of food.



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Message 7

Freeze or discard refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days or immediately, if you are unsure how long they have been sitting in the refrigerator.

Spoilage (change in taste, smell, or texture) is an indication that foods may have been mishandled. Discard spoiled foods since mishandling will allow for rapid pathogen growth.

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Myth 8

You should not put hot food in the refrigerator.

What makes this a myth?

Bacteria grow rapidly in the “danger zone” between 40 °F and 140 °F. Holding food at room temperature keeps it in the danger zone longer.

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Message 8

Put food in the refrigerator as soon after cooking as possible, at least within 2 hours of cooking (1 hour at temperatures of 90°F or higher).

Divide a large pot of food such as soup or stew into small, shallow containers to help it cool quickly.

Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below as measured with an appliance thermometer.

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Materials for Mythbusters

Materials are available for free download at www.fightbac.org

- An Educators’ Kit
- PowerPoint presentation
- JPG and PDF fliers that can be customized
- Video
- Bulletin board print outs
- Radio scripts



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Choosing What to Use

- Use the videos to build awareness and interest.
 - Also good for lower literacy audiences
 - Can show techniques effectively
- Use print materials to increase retention of specific information, such as internal temperatures and formulas.
- Use multiple methods for best retention.

Stokes CE. Investigating the efficacy of video versus text instruction for recall of food safety information. FNCE 2010.

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Food & Culinary Professionals DPG

January 19, 2011 Webinar

What Myths Would YOU Include?



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About the Partnership for Food Safety Education

The Partnership for Food Safety Education is a not-for-profit organization that unites industry associations, professional societies in food science, nutrition and health, consumer groups, and the U.S. government to educate the public about safe food handling.

Visit www.fightbac.org for free food safety education materials

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The Partnership for Food Safety Education is a non-profit organization that engages public and private sector partners in educating the public about the importance of safe food handling to good health. The American Dietetic Association is a 10-year active contributing partner.

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Questions & Answers

