

## How safe is our food?

Food is more enjoyable if you know it's safe to eat.

Most foodborne illnesses are preventable by taking precautions. Choosing safe food is in your hands.

Have you ever vomited, had stomach pains, diarrhoea, or fever? These are just a few of the more frequent symptoms associated with foodborne illness. Unfortunately, most people do not see the connection between the symptoms they are suffering from and the food that they ate.

## What are the five keys to safer food?

### 1. Keep Clean

Food safety begins with keeping clean.

Dangerous microorganisms are found everywhere. A few of the places where these unseen dangers exist include money, animals, soil, hair, skin, the human mouth, and nose.

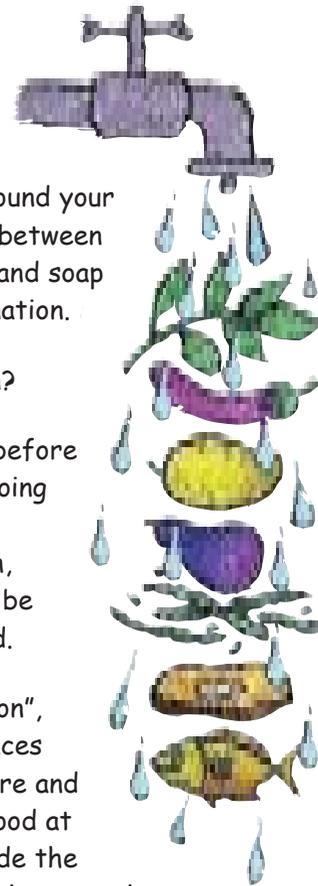


They are also present in raw meat, chicken, fish, and raw eggs — foods that spoil very easily.

Every day dangerous microorganisms can be transferred to your hands and from your hands to food. Washing your hands thoroughly (on both sides, around your thumbs, under your nails and between your fingers) with hot water and soap reduces the level of contamination.

What can we do to keep clean?

- Always wash your hands before handling food and after going to the toilet. Also avoid touching your nose, mouth, hair, or anything likely to be dirty while preparing food.
- When preparing your "baon", equipment and work surfaces should all be washed before and after use. When buying food at school or elsewhere outside the home, avoid those establishments whose food handlers don't wash their hands, equipment, and work surfaces. Look to see if the vendor is touching the food with his/her hands or using utensils. The use of utensils when handling food is better.
- Prepare, store, or buy food in places free from flies, cockroaches, mice, rats, birds, animals, and other pests that carry dangerous microorganisms. Keep food in sealed containers that do not allow pests into the food.

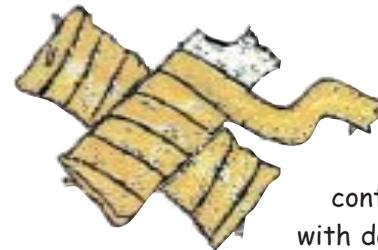


### 2. Separate raw and cooked foods

Some foods like raw meat, chicken, and seafood may contain dangerous microorganisms that can easily transfer to other food. The transfer of microorganisms from one food to another is called cross-contamination.

To find out if your food is likely to be cross-contaminated answer these few questions:

- Do you use the same chopping board or the same knife for both raw food (meat, chicken, or seafood) and for ready-to-eat food (e.g. salad, fruits, sliced processed meats, cooked food)?
- Are your hands in contact with both raw food (meat, chicken, or seafood) and ready-to-eat food (e.g. salads, fruits, sliced processed meats, cooked food)?
- Do you place cooked food back onto the same plate or surface that it came from before cooking (i.e. when it was raw)?



If your answer is yes to any one of these questions, you are at risk of contaminating your food with dangerous microorganisms.

When buying food, always look to see if the person handling them separates raw from cooked foods.

### 3. Cook thoroughly

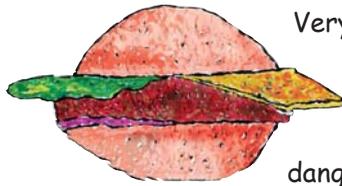
Cooking food thoroughly is one of the best methods of killing microorganisms in food. How do you tell when food is cooked thoroughly? If you have a thermometer it is easy. Cooking food

(particularly the part that is slowest to cook e.g. the centre of a large piece of meat) to a temperature of 70°C is considered thorough cooking. If no thermometer is available, you determine if food is cooked thoroughly when:



- juices that come from the food when cooked are clear, not pink;
- blood is not visible when you cut into cooked meat;
- egg yolks are not runny or liquid;
- soups and stews are brought to boiling.

Dangerous microorganisms can still be alive and cause sickness if high-risk food like meat is undercooked or raw.



Very small pieces of meat like hamburger meats are particularly dangerous when

undercooked or raw. When buying from the school canteen or anywhere outside the home, it is best to select foods that have been cooked thoroughly.

#### 4. Keep food at safe temperatures

The first thing many Filipinos do before eating is to smell their "baon" to make sure it isn't spoiled. But smelling your "baon" will not tell you if your food is safe or not.

Microorganisms grow very quickly if food is stored above 5°C and below 60°C (the danger zone). In the Philippines, many foods are sold and eaten at room temperature (about 30°C - 40°C), allowing microorganisms to rapidly increase in numbers and get to dangerous levels.

If your lunch "baon" is not going to be consumed within two hours after it has been prepared, consider preparing it the night before.



Put it in the refrigerator. Pack it the next day with a frozen drink in a watertight bag. The frozen drink will help keep the "baon" below the danger zone.

When eating out, select hot food that is piping hot. Cold food should be kept cold or refrigerated. Buy from the vendor who sells hot food hot and cold food cold.

#### 5. Use safe water and raw materials

Use only safe water when preparing food. If in doubt about the safety of the water in your area, check with the local health authorities or simply boil the water. Boiling should kill the dangerous microorganisms that may be present in the water.

What about ice in drinks? If the water used to make ice is unsafe so will be the ice itself. Buy only where you believe it has been made from safe water and where you can see it being handled hygienically.

Wash fruits and vegetables, especially if they are to be eaten raw.

Read food labels carefully and follow instructions. Start with the date. "Use by" tells you how long the food remains safe to eat.

Food is more enjoyable if you know it's safe to eat. And remember the

#### 5 Keys to Safer Food:

1. Keep Clean;
2. Separate raw and cooked food;
3. Cook food thoroughly;
4. Keep food at safe temperatures;
5. Use safe water and raw materials.

#### Contact Us

For questions about Food Safety, or further tips on making safer food choices, please call:

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# EAT SAFE. BE SAFE.



Food Safety  
at Home, School  
and Everywhere Else

