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10 Deadly Bacteria That Can Get In Your Food (And How To Stop Them From Getting There)

By Terry Nicholls

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Thousands of types of bacteria are naturally present in our environment. Not all bacteria cause disease in humans (for example, some bacteria are used beneficially in making cheese and yogurt). However, the prime causes of food-borne illness include parasites, viruses, and bacteria such as:

1. E. coli O157:H7
2. Campylobacter jejuni
3. Salmonella
4. Staphylococcus aureus
5. Listeria monocytogenes
6. Clostridium perfringens
7. Vibrio parahaemolyticus
8. Vibrio vulnificus
9. Hepatitis A virus, and
10. Norwalk and Norwalk-like virus

Bacteria that cause disease are called pathogens. These organisms can become unwelcome guests at the dinner table. When certain pathogens enter the food supply, they can cause food-borne illness. They're in a wide range of foods, including meat, milk and other dairy products, spices, chocolate,

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seafood, and even water. Millions of cases of food-borne illness occur each year.

Most cases of food-borne illness can be prevented. Careless food handling sets the stage for the growth of disease-causing "bugs." For example, hot or cold foods left standing too long at room temperature provide an ideal climate for bacteria to grow. Proper cooking or processing of food destroys bacteria.

Fresh does not always mean safe. The organisms that cause food poisoning aren't the ones that cause spoilage. Wax often coats certain kinds of produce, such as apples and cucumbers, and may trap pesticides. To remove the wax, wash with very diluted dish detergent and a soft scrub brush, or peel (the best nutrients are often in the peel, however).

Foods may be cross contaminated when cutting boards and kitchen tools that have been used to prepare a contaminated food, such as raw chicken, aren't cleaned before being used for another food,

such as vegetables.

How Bacteria Get In Food

Bacteria may be present on products when you buy them. Plastic-wrapped boneless chicken and ground meat, for example, were once part of live chicken or cattle. Raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs aren't sterile. Neither is fresh produce such as lettuce, tomatoes, sprouts, and melons. Foods, including safely cooked, ready-to-eat foods, can become cross contaminated with bacteria transferred from raw products, meat juices or other contaminated products, or from food handlers with poor personal hygiene.

Unpasteurized fruit and vegetable juices and ciders, foods made with raw or undercooked eggs, chicken, tuna, potato and macaroni salads, and cream-filled pastries harboring these pathogens have also been implicated in food-borne illnesses, as has fresh produce.

Poultry is the food most often contaminated with disease-causing organisms. It's been estimated that 60 percent or more of raw poultry sold at retail probably carries some disease-causing bacteria.

Bacteria such as *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Vibrio vulnificus*, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* and *Salmonella* have been found in raw seafood. Oysters, clams, mussels, scallops, and cockles may be contaminated with hepatitis A virus.

If you have a health problem, especially one that may have impaired your immune system, don't eat raw shellfish and use only pasteurized milk and cheese, and pasteurized or concentrated ciders and juices.

Keep It Clean

The cardinal rule of safe food preparation in the home is: Keep everything clean.

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The cleanliness rule applies to the areas where food is prepared and, most importantly, to the cook. Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before starting to prepare a meal and after handling raw meat or poultry. Cover long hair with a net or scarf, and be sure that any open sores or cuts on the hands are completely covered. If the sore or cut is infected, stay out of the kitchen.

Keep your work area clean and uncluttered. Be sure to wash the countertops with a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach to about 1 quart of water or with a commercial kitchen-cleaning agent diluted according to product directions. They're the most effective at getting rid of bacteria.

Also, be sure to keep dishcloths and sponges clean because, when wet, these materials harbor bacteria and may promote their growth. Wash dishcloths and sponges weekly in the washing machine in hot water.

While you're at it, sanitize the kitchen sink drain periodically by pouring down the sink a solution of one teaspoon bleach to one quart of water or a commercial cleaning agent. Food particles get trapped in the drain and disposal and, along with moistness, create an ideal environment for bacterial growth.

Use smooth cutting boards made of hard maple or plastic and free of cracks and crevices. Avoid boards made of soft, porous materials. Wash cutting boards with hot water, soap, and a scrub brush.

Then, sanitize them in an automatic dishwasher or by rinsing with a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach to about 1 quart of water.

Always wash and sanitize cutting boards after using them for raw foods, such as seafood or chicken, and before using them for other foods. Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked, such as raw fish, and another only for ready-to-eat foods, such as bread, fresh fruit, and cooked fish. Visit [The Cutting Board Factory](#) for a great selection of food-safe cutting boards.

Always use clean utensils and wash them between cutting different foods.

Wash the lids of canned foods before opening to keep dirt from getting into the food. Also, clean the blade of the can opener after each use. Food processors and meat grinders should be taken apart and cleaned as soon as possible after they're used.

Don't put cooked meat on an unwashed plate or platter that has held raw meat.

Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly, rinsing in warm water. Don't use soap or other detergents. If necessary (and appropriate) use a small scrub brush to remove surface dirt.

Keep your kitchen clean and bacteria-free. Clean kitchen surfaces with hot soapy water using antibacterial sponges and soaps.

The sponges themselves should be bacteria-free. Microwave them for about a minute to keep them clean and dry.

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Keep benches, cutting boards, knives, pans or other utensils clean.

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Terry Nicholls is the author of the eBook "Food Safety: Protecting Your Family From Food Poisoning". For more tips like these, and to learn more about his book, visit his website at

Bacteria and Food-borne Diseases

By Richard Massey

Types of Bacteria

Bacteria are all around us, in the air, water, ground, on our skin and in our bodies. They are classified in a variety of ways, but for our purpose we can categorize them in a more basic way.

Harmless bacteria - Most bacteria fall into this category. They are neither help us nor are harmful to us. These bacteria have a specific purpose, but are not a concerning to us in terms of food safety,

Beneficial bacteria - Believe it or not some bacteria are helpful to us. Some bacteria are used in foods to make cheeses and yogurts. And still others live in our bodies to fight of harmful bacteria.

Undesirable bacteria - Undesirable bacteria is responsible for food spoilage. This type of bacteria may not make you sick, but they show themselves by the use of odors, sticky or slimy surfaces and discoloration.

Illness causing bacteria or pathogens - These are the bacteria that cause most food-borne illnesses. Pathogens do not necessarily leave detectable odors or taste in food. This makes it impossible to tell if food is contaminated by smelling or tasting, or looking at it. The only way to protect yourself from this bacteria is by proper food handling and sanitation.

Bacteria Growth

Bacteria simply multiply by splitting in half. Under the ideal conditions, they can double in number every 15 to 30 minutes. This means that one single bacterium could multiply to a million in less than 6 hours.

What do bacteria need to multiply?

Food - Some from of food is a basic requirement for bacteria to grow.

Moisture - Water is required for bacteria in order to absorb food. Dry foods will not support bacterial growth. As well, foods with very high salt or sugar content make bacteria unable to use the moisture present.

Temperature - Bacteria grow best at warm temperatures between 40 and 140°F. This temperature

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range is what we call the food danger zone.

Air - Most bacteria require oxygen to grow, but not all. There are some exceptions, one type of bacteria being botulism.

Time - When bacteria are introduced to a new environment, they need time to adjust before they start to grow. This time is called the lag phase and last about one hour.

How is bacteria transferred?

Bacteria are carried from one place to another by being carried. This can happened by peoples hands, coughs, other food, utensils, equipment, water, or pests.

Preventing Bacteria Growth

Now that we know how bacteria grow and are spread; we should be able to prevent food–borne illness by following three simple steps.

1.Keep bacteria from spreading by not letting anything that might contain bacteria tough the food. This includes people, dirty equipment, utensils and possibly other foods.

2.Stop bacteria from growing by taking away the conditions that encourage growth. The most effective way is to keep food out of the danger zone. Keep foods below 40°F and about 140°F

3.Finally kill the bacteria. Most bacteria are killed if they are subject to a temperature above 165°F for 30 seconds. This is how we make food safe by cooking. This heat is also how we sanitize dishes and equipment. Certain chemicals (such as bleach) also kill bacteria. Using sanitizing agents is best way to sanitize counter tops and large equipment.

Chef Richard has worked in some of the finest restaurants in Washington State and is the author of the ebook "Chef's Special". You can find free recipes, informative articles and order the ebook at

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