

## Preventing Foodborne Illness At Home

What can consumers do to at home to prevent foodborne illness?

- **Don't assume everything is safe.** Wash your own produce even if it says "prewashed" on the bag.
- Wash produce in cold, free-flowing water that goes down the drain rather than in a sink full of cold water. Use a strainer so produce does not touch the bottom of the sink.
- **Invest in an inexpensive thermometer** for your home refrigerator. Most people have no idea how cold, or warm, their refrigerator really is. Items stored in the door are 3 to 5 degrees warmer. So place a thermometer in the door of your refrigerator. **Products will last anywhere from 7 to 10 days if stored at 41°F or below.**
- **Wash your hands.** Most people do a 5-second quick wash with cold water and no soap. Scrub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds (sing "Happy Birthday" to yourself twice) with soap and warm water to loosen bacteria and wash it away.
- **Replace wooden or plastic cutting boards** when they become so scored that they are hard to clean and sanitize.
- **Keep raw meats separated from ready to eat foods** by using separate cutting boards and knives.
- **Never thaw at room temperature.** Use the refrigerator, cold running water, or the microwave oven to thaw.
- Wash counters, sinks, door handles, etc. with **warm soapy water then sanitize** with a kitchen sanitizing product, or a mixture of one ounce bleach per gallon of warm water.
- Use dishwasher machine detergent that has bleach to sanitize in the dishwasher.
- Clean and sanitize refrigerator shelves and sink drains periodically.
- **Do not use sponges in the kitchen.** They harbor bacteria and are very hard to sanitize. Cloth towels that can be laundered with bleach or paper towels are better.
- **When in doubt, throw it out!** Whether it is a canned item that bubbles out when opened, mold, an unusual smell, or something that was left at room temperature more than 4 hours...**do not taste it!** Throw it away immediately.