

# Why Food Safety at *Home*?

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Believe it or not, most cases of foodborne illness originate in the *home*, not at restaurants or other public dining facilities. *Foodborne illness* is a disease carried or transmitted to people by food. Bacteria grow very quickly, especially when the proper procedures are not followed. Remember these top 5 to keep your family safe and healthy:

1. Wash hands often
2. Defrost in the refrigerator NEVER on the countertop
3. Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate
4. Cook to Proper Temperatures (remember 165 degrees F for meats and leftovers)
5. Refrigerate food promptly below 40 degrees F

It is important to wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds (tip: sing Happy Birthday 2x). Washing hands frequently can really cut down on spreading bacteria and causing illness. It is also very important to wash hands thoroughly after handling raw meats, fish, eggs, and poultry to prevent cross-contamination to other surfaces or foods.

When defrosting foods, it is best to put them in the refrigerator the night before you plan to cook it. Foods, especially raw meat, fish, or poultry can also be defrosted in the microwave but must then be cooked immediately.

Ideally, you should have two cutting boards, one for raw meats, fish and poultry, and one for vegetables, fruits, cheeses, and other foods. Cutting boards should be washed with warm water and dish detergent, rinsed thoroughly, sanitized with a bleach and water solution, and once again rinsed thoroughly.

Meats, poultry, fish and leftovers need to be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F to destroy dangerous bacteria that could otherwise cause foodborne illness. All food needs to be put in the refrigerator within 2 hours unless the temperature in your house is 80 degrees F or above, then it needs to be refrigerated within one hour. Your refrigerator needs to be set at 40 degrees F or below.

Please go to [www.homefoodsafety.org](http://www.homefoodsafety.org) for more information, “Lunchbox Safety” tips and to take a quiz on what you’ve learned in this article, if you like!