

# Food Safety Fact Sheet

## **Foodborne illnesses are caused by microorganisms present in food**

Foodborne organisms may be bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, *Shigella*, or *E. coli* O157:H7, virus, and parasites. They can contaminate many different foods—meat, milk, fish, shellfish, poultry, eggs, fruit, and fresh vegetables, to name a few. These organisms, or toxins they produce, may make you sick.

## **Many foodborne illnesses occur because of the way food is handled and prepared**

You can help prevent these infections by not giving harmful microorganisms a chance to multiply and/or contaminate foods. If you suspect that you have handled or prepared any food incorrectly, it is better to throw it away or consult a food safety information service before serving or eating it.

### **Tips for keeping food safe:**

#### **■ Wash hands with soap and warm water:**

- Before and after preparing food
- After handling raw meat or poultry
- Before handling ready-to-eat food, such as salads or sandwiches
- After handling anything that may contaminate your hands

#### **■ Prevent cross-contamination of foods with raw foods**

- Keep raw meats and poultry separate from other foods.
- Thaw foods on a plate in the refrigerator on the lowest shelf possible. Don't allow their juices to drip on other foods.
- Clean and disinfect cutting boards and kitchen surfaces after preparing different food. It is best to clean with hot soapy water, then sanitize with a bleach solution. Be sure to rinse well.

#### **■ Cook foods thoroughly**

- Cook meat and poultry thoroughly. Using an accurate meat thermometer is the best way to ensure that food is thoroughly cooked.
- Do not taste or eat raw, rare, or even pink ground meat or poultry in any form.
- Cook seafood until it is opaque and flaky.
- Do not eat raw shellfish, such as oysters or clams, even if it is marinated.
- Cook eggs thoroughly; they should be firm and not runny.
- Avoid eating foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs, like some Caesar salad dressings.

#### **■ Store foods properly**

- Refrigerate and freeze perishable foods right away.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or microwave oven, not the kitchen counter or sink.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold after they are prepared.
- Do not leave perishable food at room temperature for longer than two hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers in shallow containers or tightly wrapped bags.