



NUTRITION

SIMPLE STEPS FOR BETTER FOOD SAFETY

How we store and prepare food is important, to avoid getting sick with cramps and diarrhoea (or worse). And you may not be able to tell there's a problem with the food just by appearance, smell, or taste – as even a tiny taste may make you sick, warns the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Salmonella may even be in play dough!

The CDC says salmonella “causes more foodborne illnesses than any other bacteria. Chicken is a major source of these illnesses”. Uncooked or undercooked cookie dough, soft-cooked eggs – and even play dough – may have salmonella or other harmful bacteria.

Botulism, rare but sometimes life-threatening

The Mayo Clinic explains that botulism – “a condition caused by a toxin that attacks the body’s nerves” – can occur through food contamination. The typical source of foodborne botulism “is homemade food that is improperly canned or preserved.”

Four basic steps for food safety

One of the best ways to safeguard yourself from foodborne illnesses is to practise good kitchen and food hygiene. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) offers these steps:

1. Clean

- **Wash hands**, knives, chopping boards, dishes, and countertops in soapy water.
- **Rinse** fruit and vegetables in water.
- **Do not wash** chicken, fish, eggs, or meat – it can spread bacteria.

2. Separate raw meat, fish, and eggs

- **Store these separately** from other foods.
- **Don't use the same plate** or board you used for raw food; for cooked food.

3. Cook

- **Heat kills germs.** Cook meat, fish, and eggs thoroughly.

4. Chill

- **Refrigerate food within two hours** or even sooner in hot weather.
- **Defrost or marinate food in the fridge**, not on the counter.

Make hygiene easier

A study in the *Food Control* journal suggests that food be prepared less than a metre from the sink, to make hygiene easier.

People who are most at risk?

Botulism symptoms may include difficulty speaking or swallowing, stomach cramps, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms of salmonella include cramps, vomiting, diarrhoea, and fever.

Some people are at higher risk, such as children under five, adults 65 and older, and people with “certain medical conditions (such as diabetes, liver or kidney disease, and cancer) or their treatments”.

If you suspect food poisoning or infections, seek medical assistance without delay.