

A word about **good housekeeping**

Insects, rats, and mice can also contaminate food. These animals and their droppings carry germs and dirt. You must control pests by keeping areas clean and getting rid of nesting areas. If you do get insects, rats, or mice, use traps or chemicals to control and kill them. Remember to keep areas where pests appear clean at all times.

Store chemicals and pest control supplies away from food. You don't want chemicals getting into food.

DHEC is working for you.

South Carolina law says that restaurants and food stores must follow safe food practices. DHEC inspects retail food establishments. They also educate and train food service employees so they will understand and practice food safety regulations.

Safe handling of food is not just for you to do at home. DHEC makes sure that restaurants and food stores are clean, too. South Carolina law requires that food services and stores be inspected once a year. However, DHEC inspects these places two to six times a year.

DHEC makes unannounced inspections of restaurants but also depends upon the public to report unclean or unsafe conditions. Inspections are also done when a complaint is made. Each area inspected has a point value. If the standards are not met, points are subtracted. At the end of the inspection, all the points are totaled and the restaurant or store is given a rating.

The rating scale is:

88-100 points = A (excellent)
78-87 points = B (acceptable)
70-77 points = C (marginal)

If a restaurant or food store gets a "C" rating or lower, action is taken immediately to improve conditions. Grades are posted in an easy to see location, so that you will know about the safe food practices and sanitary conditions inside. If you want to find out the reasons a place has a low grade, call your local DHEC office.

For more information,
contact DHEC's Division of
Food Protection at
(803) 896-0640



South Carolina Department of Health
and Environmental Control

Environmental Health/Food Protection
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The Facts About **Food Protection**

avoiding foodborne illness

The facts about Food Protection

The next time you bite into a hamburger, think about how the food was cooked and handled. Why? Because you can get sick if the food contains germs. Germs that cause foodborne illness can be bacteria, viruses (such as Norwalk or Hepatitis A) and other microscopic creatures. Germs can get into food if the cook doesn't practice:

- Good personal cleanliness
- Safe preparation and cooking
- Safe holding of cooked food
- Prevention of cross-contamination

Often bacteria is present in food products. E. coli and Salmonella bacteria should be expected on raw products but can be killed by proper handling and cooking of food.

Bacteria cause food to spoil. Illnesses caused by food happen when a person eats food that contains germs. The contaminated food often looks, tastes and smells normal. Sometimes it takes just a small amount of bacteria to cause foodborne illness.

Good Personal Cleanliness

People are one of the most common causes of food contamination. Bacteria gets on ready-to-eat food when:

- You touch food with dirty hands
- You touch food with dirty utensils
- You place food on dirty working surfaces

Most germs in food come from our hands. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water before preparing food. Wash your hands as many times as you need to while you prepare food. Wash your hands after using the toilet, smoking, eating, drinking, handling raw meat, coughing and sneezing.

Keep yourself clean by daily bathing, cleaning your fingernails and keeping your hands free from cuts.

Anything coming into contact with food must be clean.

Safe preparation of food

Preparing the work area: Dirty utensils and work surfaces carry germs. Wash all utensils and surfaces before starting to work. Wash utensils and surfaces as many times as you need to while you prepare food.

Make sure that clean items do not touch dirty or contaminated ones. After cutting raw meat, wash the cutting board or surface area before cutting vegetables or ready-to-eat foods on the same surface. This will prevent bacteria that were on the meat from getting onto vegetables or other foods (cross-contamination).

Bacteria can get back onto food after cooking. Be sure to avoid placing cooked food back onto the same plate that was used to carry the raw food to the grill. Use a clean plate to transport food to the table.

Don't use the same knife to cut raw meats or poultry and then to cut other foods. Wash knives and other utensils before cutting different foods.

Thawing: Be careful when thawing food. You cannot safely thaw food at room temperature. Food thaws unevenly, especially large food products such as turkey and ham. The safest way to thaw food is in the refrigerator. This may take up to three days, but this method is safer than thawing overnight in the sink or on the counter.

You may also thaw food under cold running water or during cooking. It is safe to thaw in a microwave if the food will be cooked promptly.

Safe Cooking: Cooking foods to their proper ("safe") temperature will reduce most harmful bacteria. Use a metal stem food thermometer to take internal temperatures (poke thermometer into the center of the product).



Safe cooking temps

	Minimum Temperatures
Poultry, stuffing, stuffed meats, pasta, meat stuffing <i>(With no interruption of the cooking process)</i>	165° F
Ground beef or food containing ground beef <i>(Take an internal temperature)</i>	155° F
Roast beef and beef steak <i>(Take a surface temperature)</i>	155° F
Pork, any food containing pork <i>(Take an internal temperature)</i>	155° F
Game animals	155° F
Eggs, food containing eggs <i>(Including liquid, frozen or dried eggs)</i>	145° F
Fish	145° F

Safe holding of food

After cooking, keep hot foods at a temperature no lower than 130°F until served. Store food that needs to be cold at 45°F or below. Dairy products and melons should be stored and served at 45° F.

Cooling: You do not have to cool foods before refrigerating them. The faster a food cools, the safer it will be. Food will cool faster if it is placed in a shallow container. Large items such as roasts, turkeys or large amounts of stew should be separated into smaller portions and then refrigerated. A good rule of thumb is that shallow containers should be no deeper than 4 inches.

Cross-Contamination

It is very important to keep food safe. In the refrigerator, do not let raw food drip onto other foods. Keep raw foods separated from each other in a pan on the bottom shelf. This prevents juices from dripping onto foods that won't have further cooking. Keep cooked foods or foods to be eaten raw, such as vegetables, fruits, puddings, and luncheon meats on shelves above raw foods.