



## Food Safety for Elders

As we age our bodies have a harder time fighting germs. It becomes much easier to become sick from the germs we ingest with our food.

Certain medical conditions increase the risk. Conditions include but are not limited to items like a chronic illness, lowered immune system, cancer treatments, diabetes, kidney or liver disease.

To help prevent sickness caused by germs, elders should eat healthy and avoid certain foods – especially raw products.



## Some foods to avoid

- Raw fish
- Raw shellfish, such as oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops
- Raw meat or poultry
- Raw or unpasteurized milk or cheese
- Soft cheeses such as feta, brie, blue, and Mexican-style
- Raw or lightly cooked eggs or egg products, such as salad dressings, cookie dough, cake batter, sauces, and drinks such as eggnog
- Raw sprouts
- Unpasteurized or untreated juice from fruits and veggies

Avoid all juice products that have not been pasteurized.

Pasteurization kills germs and makes the juice safe to drink. If the juice has not been treated, the Food and Drug Administration requires a label on the product stating this.

“WARNING: This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with a weak immune system.”

## Illness

Since germs cannot be seen or smelled, it’s impossible to tell if a food item is contaminated.

Food-related illness is not always caused by your last meal as harmful bacteria in food usually take one to three days to affect a person. However, some germs can cause sickness within six minutes of eating or take as long as six weeks to take effect.

Food that has been contaminated with illness causing bacteria can be very dangerous and sometimes even fatal.



However, following a few simple food handling rules can greatly reduce and prevent food related illness.

## Prevention

There are three important rules for prevention to spreading germs: Clean, Separate and Cook.

1. Clean – always wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food. Cook utensils should also be washed and cleaned prior to using them. Paper towels are better for cleaning up rather than using a cloth dishtowel. The paper towels can be disposed of after usage. Raw produce should always be washed before consuming it.
2. Separate – always separate raw meat, poultry and seafood products from your other groceries while shopping and when storing in the refrigerator. Do not let these raw items come in contact with your other food items. When preparing food, use a different cutting board for your meat, poultry, seafood and other food products.
3. Cook - always cook your food thoroughly using the proper cooking temperature recommend for each food item. When reheating leftovers they should be cooked 165°F and liquid items should be brought to a boil.

Sources:

*U.S. Food and Drug Administration*

<http://www.fda.gov/womens/getthefacts/foodsafety-seniors.html>

*Food Safety – Gateway to Government Food Safety Information*

<http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/sr2.html>