Food contaminations are making headlines again across the nation. Each year, 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick from and 3,000 die of foodborne diseases. You can reduce the risk of foodborne illness by following the four food preparation tips below that are recommended by the CDC. You can also stay current on the latest food recall and alerts by going to www.foodsafety.gov.

**Clean:** Illness-causing bacteria can survive in many places around your kitchen, including your hands, utensils, and cutting boards.

- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and running water. Scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Wash surfaces and utensils after each use. Rinsing utensils, countertops, and cutting boards with water won’t do enough to stop bacteria from spreading. Clean utensils and small cutting boards with hot, soapy water. Clean surfaces and cutting boards with a bleach solution.
- Wash fruits and veggies—but not meat, poultry, or eggs. Even if you plan to peel fruits and veggies, it’s important to wash them first because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside as you cut or peel them.

**Separate:** Even after you’ve cleaned your hands and surfaces thoroughly, raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can still spread illness-causing bacteria to ready-to-eat foods—unless you keep them separate.

- Use separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils for raw (uncooked) produce and for raw (uncooked) meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs.
- Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods while you’re shopping at the grocery store and when stored in the refrigerator.

**Cook:** While many people think they can tell when food is “done” simply by checking its color and texture, there’s no way to be sure it’s safe without following a few important but simple steps.

- Use a food thermometer to make sure food reaches its safe minimum cooking temperature. Internal temperatures should be 145°F for whole meats (allowing the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating), 160°F for ground meats, and 165°F for all poultry. Eggs should be cooked until the yolk is firm.
- During meal times, while food is being served and eaten, keep it hot (at 140 °F or above). After meals are over, refrigerate leftover food quickly.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. Illness-causing bacteria can grow in many foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them. (During the summer heat, cut that time down to one hour.)

- Refrigerate the foods that tend to spoil more quickly (like fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs, and meats) within two hours. Warm foods will chill faster if they are divided into several clean, shallow containers.
- Thaw or marinate foods in the refrigerator, never on the counter or in the kitchen sink.

**REPORT:** If you believe you or someone you know became ill from eating a certain food, please contact your local health department. You can be an important part of discovering what foods made you and others sick!