

Fight BAC![®]

Four Simple Steps to Food Safety

1. Clean

Wash hands and surfaces often

Bacteria can get onto hands, cutting boards, utensils, sponges and counter tops. Here's how to Fight BAC![®]:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and running water before handling food, and after using the bathroom, changing diapers or handling pets.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot, soapy water after preparing food.
- Use plastic or other nonporous cutting boards. Run boards through the dishwasher or wash in hot, soapy water after each use.
- Use paper towels or clean cloths to clean kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the washing machine with hot water.

2. Separate

Don't cross contaminate

Cross-contamination is how bacteria spreads from one food to another. This happens when handling raw meat, poultry and seafood. Keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. Here's how to Fight BAC![®]:

- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods in your shopping cart, grocery bags and refrigerator.
- If you use reusable grocery bags, be sure to wash them often and put raw meats into a disposable bag first.
- If possible, use a different cutting board for raw meat products.
- Wash hands, cutting boards, dishes and utensils with hot, soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- Never put cooked food on a plate that just held raw meat, poultry or seafood.

3. Cook

Cook to proper temperatures

Temperature is the only way to make sure cooked food is safe. The best way to Fight BAC![®] is to:

- Use a clean thermometer to check the temperature inside foods like meat, poultry and casseroles to make sure food is cooked all the way through.
- Cook ground beef to at least 160 degrees F. The color of the meat is not an indicator of thorough cooking.
- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.



- When cooked, fish is opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
- When cooking in a microwave, cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking. This avoids cold spots where bacteria can survive. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to at least 165 degrees F.



4. Chill

Refrigerate promptly

Cold temperatures keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Set your refrigerator no higher than 40 degrees F and the freezer at 0 degrees F. Check these temperatures with a thermometer. Fight BAC![®] by following these steps:

- Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, dairy foods, eggs and leftovers within two hours.
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave. Don't defrost food at room temperature. Marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- Don't over-pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food cold.

Keeping cutting boards clean and safe

- Wash all cutting boards with hot, soapy water. Rinse and air dry, or...
- Put your cutting board in your dishwasher to clean.

Cleaning vs. sanitizing

- Clean first, then sanitize. Cleaning removes food or dirt. Sanitizing reduces the number of bacteria, which helps prevent foodborne illness and food contamination.
- Sanitize wood and plastic cutting boards with a sanitizing solution: 1 teaspoon liquid chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water. Flood the surface of the clean cutting board with the sanitizing solution and let it stand for a few minutes. Rinse and air dry.
- Throw away cutting boards that wear out.
- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat, poultry and fish, and another one for ready-to-eat foods like salads, vegetables or bread. This prevents bacteria from raw meat getting on ready-to-eat food and contaminating it.

For more information about safe food handling and preparation, contact the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hot line at 1-888-MPHotline or 1-888-674-6854, by email at MPHHotline@usda.gov, or go online to the Partnership for Food Safety Education website: fightbac.org

Some information taken from Cutting Boards (Plastic vs. Wood), Arizona Cooperative Extension, 10/08, online at extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1076.pdf
Based on most current USDA, FSIS recommendations.