

Dangerous Food Safety Mistakes

From the web site www.foodsafety.gov

Sometimes a simple mistake can have grave consequences. What may seem like a small food safety mistake can cause serious illness with long-term consequences.

When it comes to some germs, such as *Salmonella*, all it takes is 15 to 20 cells in undercooked food to cause food poisoning. And just a tiny taste of food with botulism toxin can cause paralysis and even death.

Here are some common food safety mistakes that have been proven to cause serious illness.

Mistake #1: Tasting food to see if it's still good

Why: You can't taste (or smell or see) the bacteria that cause food poisoning. Tasting only a tiny amount can cause serious illness.

Solution: Throw food out before harmful bacteria grows. Check the [Safe Storage Times chart](#) to be sure.

Mistake #2: Putting cooked meat back on a plate that held raw meat

Why: Germs from the raw meat can spread to the cooked meat.

Solution: Always use separate plates for raw meat and cooked meat. The same rule applies to poultry and seafood.

Mistake #3: Thawing food on the counter

Why: Harmful germs can multiply extremely rapidly at room temperature.

Solution: [Thaw food safely](#):

- - In the refrigerator
 - In cold water
 - In the microwave

Mistake #4: Washing meat or poultry

Why: Washing raw meat or poultry can spread bacteria to your sink, countertops, and other surfaces in your kitchen.

Solution: Don't wash meat, poultry, or eggs.

Mistake #5: Letting food cool before putting it in the fridge

Why: Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours unless you refrigerate them

Solution: [Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours](#) (or within 1 hour if the temperature is over 90°F).

Mistake #6: Eating raw cookie dough (or other foods with uncooked eggs)

Why: Uncooked eggs may contain *Salmonella* or other harmful bacteria.

Solution: Always cook eggs thoroughly. Avoid foods that contain raw or undercooked eggs.

Mistake #7: Marinating meat or seafood on the counter

Why: Harmful germs in meat or seafood can multiply extremely rapidly at room temperature.

Solution: Always marinate meat or seafood in the refrigerator.

Mistake #8: Using raw meat marinade on cooked food

Why: Germs from the raw meat (or seafood) can spread to the cooked food.

Solution: You can reuse marinade only if you bring it to a boil just before using.

Mistake #9: Undercooking meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs

Why: Cooked food is safe only after it's been cooked to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria

Solution: Use the [Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures chart](#) and a food thermometer.

Mistake #10: Not washing your hands

Why: Germs on your hands can contaminate the food that you or others eat.

Solution: Wash hands the right way—for 20 seconds with soap and running water.