MAKE FOOD SAFETY A PRIORITY

The US food supply is among the safest in the world, but organisms that you can't see, smell or taste – bacteria, viruses and tiny parasites – are everywhere in the environment. These microorganisms – called pathogens – can invade food and cause illness, sometimes severe and even life-threatening, especially in young children, older adults, persons with weakened immune systems and pregnant women.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are important to the health and well-being of Americans and we enjoy one of the safest supplies of fresh produce in the world. However, although low, the proportion of foodborne illness associated with fresh fruits and vegetables has increased over the last several years. As health and nutrition experts continue to recommend we add more fruits and vegetables to a healthy daily diet, it becomes increasingly important that consumers know how to handle them properly.

Handling fruits and vegetables safely is easy. Although an invisible enemy may be in your kitchen, by practicing the following recommendations you can Fight BAC!®

These messages were developed by the Partnership for Food Safety Education.

The Partnership for Food Safety Education unites industry associations, consumer and public health groups and the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, to educate the public about safe food handling and preparation. The Partnership, a non-profit organization, is the creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® campaign, a food safety education program developed using scientifically based recommendations and resulting from an extensive consumer research process. Fight BAC!® materials are fully accessible online at www.fightbac.org and utilized by consumers, teachers, dietitians, public health officials and extension agents across the United States. Fight BAC!® and BAC! images, © 2004, Partnership for Food Safety Education.

County of Los Angeles Public Health

This material made available with support from the Produce Marketing Association. For produce education information and tools, general food safety information and to register to be a BAC!® fighter, visit www.fightbac.org today! For additional food safety information, visit www.foodsafety.gov.

FIGHT BAC!®

Safe Handling of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

PROVIDED BY THE PARTNERSHIP FOR FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION

SIX STEPS TO SAFER FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Check

- Check to be sure that the fresh fruits and vegetables you buy are not bruised or damaged.
- Check that fresh cut fruits and vegetables like packaged salads and precut melons are refrigerated at the store before buying. Do not buy fresh cut items that are not refrigerated.

Clean

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards, counter tops, peelers and knives that will touch fresh fruits or vegetables before and after food preparation.

- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat", "washed" or "triple washed" need not be washed.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel.
- Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.

Separate

- When shopping, be sure fresh fruits and vegetables are separated from household chemicals and raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood in your cart and in bags at checkout.
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry or seafood in your refrigerator.
- Separate fresh fruits and vegetables from raw meat, poultry and seafood. Do not use the same cutting board without cleaning with hot water and soap before and after preparing fresh fruits and vegetables.

Cook

- Cook or throw away fruits or vegetables that have touched raw meat, poultry, seafood or their juices.

Chill

- Refrigerate all cut, peeled or cooked fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours.

Throw Away

- Throw away fresh fruits and vegetables that have not been refrigerated within two hours of cutting, peeling or cooking.
- Remove and throw away bruised or damaged portions of fruits and vegetables when preparing to cook them or before eating them raw.
- Throw away any fruit or vegetable that will not be cooked if it has touched raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- If in doubt, throw it out!

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