



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Who Is Most At Risk For Foodborne Illness?

(NAPSA)—“Double trouble” can be losing the keys to both your car and your house at the same time. People who are “at risk” can be in double trouble if they get sick by eating food that contains disease-causing bacteria. That’s because their immune systems are already fighting another illness such as diabetes, cancer or HIV/AIDS.

### Why Are They At Risk?

**Diabetics:** Diabetes can affect various organs in the body, causing them not to function properly and making the diabetic person more susceptible to infection. The immune system may delay recognizing harmful bacteria or other pathogens (disease-causing organisms).

**People with Cancer:** A side effect of chemotherapy, radiation and other medications prescribed to help fight cancer is that they may weaken the immune system, as will any progression of the disease itself.

**HIV/AIDS:** The HIV virus that causes AIDS weakens the immune system, making the person more vulnerable to developing a foodborne illness.

**Older Adults:** As people age, their bodies don’t work as well as when they were younger. The stomach, intestinal tract, liver and kidneys may not efficiently rid the body of toxins, and some medicines can weaken immunity.

**Transplant Recipients:** Medications to keep the body from rejecting the transplanted organ or bone marrow can also suppress the immune system. Thus, the transplant recipient is more susceptible to developing infections that can be caused by foodborne illness.

### The Keys to Avoiding Foodborne Illnesses

To avoid contracting a food-



**To avoid contracting a foodborne illness, some people who are at risk should be especially vigilant when handling, preparing and consuming foods.**

borne illness, people at risk should be especially vigilant when handling food. USDA’s “Be Food Safe” campaign advises to follow these four easy steps to help those at risk be food safe:

**Clean.** Frequent cleaning can keep bacteria from getting on hands, cutting boards, knives and countertops.

**Separate.** Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat food to avoid cross-contamination.

**Cook.** Use a food thermometer to make sure food reaches a safe minimum internal temperature. You can’t tell food is cooked safely by how it looks.

**Chill.** Bacteria spread fastest at temperatures between 40° F and 140° F. Don’t leave food out more than 2 hours, and refrigerate or freeze food to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

To find out more about food safety, go to [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov) or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854).