

# Food Safety

## Helpful Hints From Experts

### Don't Sacrifice Safety When Using A Microwave

(NAPSA)—The convenience of microwave cooking can also present a few challenges—such as making sure that food prepared in a microwave is cooked to its safe temperature.

The consequences of not preparing food properly can be significant. Every year, one in six Americans will fall ill due to some form of food poisoning. Often, it's the result of not cooking food to the required temperature.

To help, the USDA's Food Safety And Inspection Service (FSIS) has created the Cook It Safe campaign.

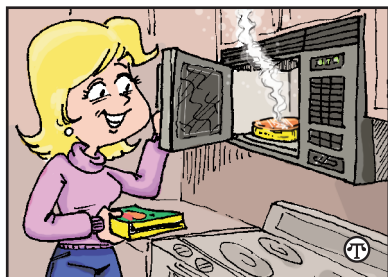
The campaign offers these tips:

**Read and Follow Package Cooking Instructions.** Many convenience foods are not ready-to-eat products and must be properly cooked first. Reading the product label and package directions tells you whether the product needs to be thoroughly cooked or simply reheated.

Be sure to follow all package instructions for microwaving food, such as covering or stirring the food or allowing a "stand time" between cooking the food and eating. Skipping these key cooking directions may allow harmful bacteria to survive and lead to food-borne illness.

**Know When to Use a Microwave or Conventional Oven.** Some preprepared products may appear to be fully cooked but actually consist of raw, uncooked product. It may be tempting to cook these foods quickly in a microwave, but doing so may result in unsafe food.

It's important to use the appliance recommended on the food



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package instructions. The instructions may call for cooking in a conventional oven, microwave, convection oven or toaster oven.

**Know Your Microwave's Wattage Before Microwaving Food.** If your microwave's wattage is lower than the wattage recommended in the package cooking instructions, it will take longer than the instructions specify to cook the food to a safe internal temperature. If you don't know the wattage of your oven, try looking on the inside of the oven's door, on the serial number plate on the back of the oven or in the owner's manual.

**Always Use a Food Thermometer to Ensure a Safe Internal Temperature.** To be sure food has reached a temperature high enough to kill any bacteria that may be present, use a food thermometer and test the food in several places. This applies when cooking in microwaves or any other heat source.

For more information, visit [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov).