

Facts from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Tips For Avoiding Food Contamination

(NAPSA)—Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a nutritious diet but they can also harbor bacteria that can make you sick. Improper agricultural practices, such as irrigating with unsanitary water, can introduce bacteria. Poor storage and transportation practices can result in contamination, as can unsafe handling by grocers, restaurants and consumers in the home. Here are some tips to keep in mind when handling fruits and vegetables that can protect you and your family from illness.

1. Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food.
2. Rinse raw produce in water. Don't use soap or other detergents. If necessary, use a small scrub brush to remove surface dirt.
3. Use smooth, durable and nonabsorbent cutting boards that can be cleaned easily. Plastic is easier to clean and less porous than wood.
4. Wash cutting boards with hot water, soap and a scrub brush to remove food particles. Then sanitize boards by putting through the automatic dishwasher or rinsing in a solution of 1 tsp. bleach to 1 quart of water.
5. Store cut, peeled and broken-apart fruits and vegetables,



Rinsing fresh fruits and vegetables is necessary to prevent illness.

such as melon balls, at or below 40 degrees F, in the refrigerator.

6. People whose immune systems may be compromised—people who are very young or very old, have a chronic disease or take certain medicines—should stick with specially treated or pasteurized juices and cider. Pasteurization kills harmful levels of bacteria.

7. When buying from a salad bar, avoid fruits and vegetables that look brownish, slimy or dried out. These are signs that the product has been held at an improper temperature.

For more information, call the FDA at (800) FDA-4010 or visit www.fda.gov.