



Health
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Poultry Facts

Updated:

October 2010

IT'S YOUR HEALTH

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The Issue

Thousands of Canadians get food poisoning every year from food that has not been stored, prepared or cooked properly. It often happens with turkey and chicken but by following some simple rules in the kitchen, you can help protect your family from food poisoning.



Background

Food poisoning is caused by eating foods that are contaminated by some type of bacteria, like Salmonella. It's not unusual for raw turkey and chicken to be contaminated. Other raw foods like meat, fish, seafood, unpasteurized dairy products, and products containing raw eggs can also be a problem.

Cooking food at high temperatures usually kills the bacteria contained in the food itself. However, that precaution doesn't help to control bacteria that may have spread to your refrigerator, counters or

utensils while the food was being stored or prepared.

Minimizing Your Risk

It's not possible to tell if food is contaminated simply by looking at it. For that reason, it's best to treat all poultry and other raw meats as though they are contaminated. To protect your family's health, follow these guidelines:

Storing

- Bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature. When you buy poultry, don't leave it sitting in the car or on a counter when you get home. Refrigerate or freeze it immediately.
- Use refrigerated poultry within two or three days.



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Thawing

- Always defrost food in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave, never at room temperature.
- Drippings produced during thawing may be contaminated. Since you can't know for sure, play it safe by cleaning and disinfecting any surface touched by drippings.
- You can safely re-freeze defrosted poultry if the meat is still cold and ice crystals are still present.

Preparing

- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling poultry, or any raw meat.
- If anything in your kitchen (including utensils, cutting boards, counters and dish cloths) has been in direct contact with raw poultry or its juices, clean them thoroughly before using again to prepare other foods.

Stuffing

- Stuffing is moist and is slow to heat up and cool down. For those reasons, stuffing provides an ideal place for bacteria to grow.
- The safest way to cook stuffing is separately, either in its own oven dish or on the stove top.
- If you're going to stuff a bird, stuff it loosely just before roasting.
- All stuffing, whether cooked separately or inside a bird, should be heated to a minimum internal temperature of 74°C (165°F).
- Take all of the stuffing out of the bird immediately after cooking.

Cooking

- Never eat raw or undercooked turkey or chicken.

- It's best to use a meat thermometer. Cook birds until the temperature of the thickest part of the breast or thigh is 85°C (185°F).
- Cook raw poultry meat (especially ground meat and turkey rolls) thoroughly to the centre. Be certain that juices are no longer pink.



- As a general rule of thumb, poultry is done when:
 - the leg of a whole bird moves easily
 - the meat in cuts of poultry is tender to the fork, with no pink showing anywhere.

Using Leftovers

- To store leftovers safely, cut and debone the meat from large cooked birds. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within two hours in covered shallow containers.
- If you're not going to remove the meat from the carcass, be sure to refrigerate the cooked bird after it has cooled, but within two hours of cooking.
- Make sure that cooked foods don't come into contact with food that hasn't been cooked.
- Use refrigerated leftovers as soon as possible, ideally within two or three days.

- When reheating food, make sure it's piping hot. In general, you shouldn't reheat the same leftovers more than once.

Cleaning

- Plastic cutting boards are best because they're easier to sanitize.
- To sanitize kitchen materials (dishes, cutting boards and utensils), put them in the dishwasher, or:
 - wash them with hot water and detergent
 - use a solution of 5 ml (1 tsp) of bleach in 750 ml (3 cups) of water to disinfect them
 - rinse again with fresh water, and dry them
- Bacteria can thrive in dish cloths, so change them every day. Keep them clean by washing with detergent as part of your regular laundry load, or by hand-washing then soaking them in diluted bleach.
- Don't hang dish cloths near the kitchen garbage pail. For greater protection against the spread of germs, choose a kitchen garbage pail with a self-closing lid.

By following these suggestions, you can help protect your family from food poisoning. It's your health, and it's up to you.

Health Canada's Role

Health Canada sets policies and standards governing the safety and nutritional quality of all food sold in





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Canada. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) enforces the policies and standards, ensuring that any foodborne illness is detected early, and that all necessary warnings go out to the public quickly.

As a founding member of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education, Health Canada also participates in public awareness campaigns about safe food practices. One example is a program called *Fight BAC!®*, which encourages Canadian consumers to think of food safety at every step of the food handling process, from shopping for groceries to re-heating leftovers.

Need More Info?

For more information on food safety and foodborne illnesses, go to the following websites:

- Government of Canada's **Food Safety portal** at: www.foodsafety.gc.ca
- Health Canada's Food Safety section at:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/index-eng.php>
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency **Salmonella section** at:
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/cause/salmonellae.shtml>
or call: 1-800-442-2342
- Canadian Partnership For Consumer Food Safety Education **Be Food Safe**

website at:

<http://www.befoodsafe.ca/en-home.asp>

- **The Food Safety Network** at:
<http://www.foodsafetynetwork.ca/>
- *It's Your Health* - **Food & Nutrition** section:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/index-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health* - **Salmonella Prevention**:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/salmonella-eng.php>
- Public Health Agency of Canada - **Food Safety** :
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fs-sa/index-eng.php>

Links to other useful websites:

- **Eating well with Canada's Food Guide** at: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide
- Dietitians of Canada, **Turkey (whole)** at:
http://www.dietitians.ca/english/kitchen/fridge/main_fridge_turkey.html
- Health Canada's **Consumer Safety Portal** for safety information about food, health and consumer products at: www.health.gc.ca/consumer
- For additional articles on health and safety issues, go to the *It's Your Health* website at: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh

You can also call toll free at
1-866-225-0709
or TTY at 1-800-267-1245*

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