

Know how. Know now.

Food Safety for Families

Produce Safety

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Dear Parents,

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Your local markets carry an amazing variety of fresh



fruits and vegetables that are both nutritious and delicious. Handle these products safely to reduce the risks of foodborne illness. Harmful bacteria that may be in the soil or water where produce grows may come in contact with the fruits and vegetables and contaminate them. Or, fresh produce may become contaminated after it is harvested; during preparation or storage. Eating contaminated produce can lead to foodborne illness. However, it is easy to help protect yourself and your family from illness by following these safe handling tips!

Buying Fresh Produce

- Purchase produce that is not bruised or cut and is free of mold. The peel is a barrier to prevent microorganisms from contaminating the inside of fruits and vegetables.
- When selecting fresh cut produce such as a half a watermelon or bagged mixed salad greens – choose only those items that are surrounded by ice.



Many precut, bagged, or packaged produce items like lettuce are pre-washed and ready to eat. You can use the product without further washing.

Storing Fresh Produce

 Certain perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms) are best maintained by storing them in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40°F or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer to



check the temperature of your fridge! If you are not sure if the produce will be negatively affected by the cold to maintain quality, go to www.4daythrowaway.org.

 All produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled should be refrigerated to maintain both quality and safety.





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FightBac!®

Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems.

Preparing Fresh Produce

- When preparing any fresh produce, begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for 15 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparation
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.
- All produce should be thoroughly washed under cool water before eating.



This includes produce grown conventionally or organically at home, or produce that is purchased from a grocery store or farmer's market. Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting, or cooking, not before you store them.

- Wash melons, oranges, lemons and bananas before you peel them.
- Refrigerate fresh produce within 2 hours of peeling or cutting.
- Do not use soap or detergent on fresh produce. These products are not intended for consumption. Produce washes may be used, but are not necessary for safety.

 Scrub firm produce like melons, potatoes, carrots and cucumbers with a clean vegetable brush.



 Drying produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel may further reduce bacteria that may be present.

Separate for Safety

- Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood— and from kitchen utensils used for those products.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot water and soap between preparation of raw meat, poultry and seafood products and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked.
- For added protection, kitchen sanitizers can be used on cutting boards and counter tops periodically. Try a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach to one gallon of warm water OR use Lysol® following the directions on the container.

