

Food Safety

This leaflet will provide you with information on how to handle, cook, and store food safely. It also provides simple steps to prevent food poisoning and stay safe.

What is food safety?

Food safety means preparing, cooking, and storing food in a way that prevents illness. It helps keep harmful germs out of food.

Why does food safety matter?

Food safety is important because:

- It helps reduce the risk of food poisoning.
- It protects individuals and families from illness and helps keep food safe to eat.

Food Safety in Qatar:

Qatar's hot climate can increase the risk of food spoilage and foodborne illness if food is not handled and stored safely. During warmer months, keep food refrigerated, avoid leaving cooked food at room temperature for long periods, and follow safe food handling practices to help prevent food poisoning.

What is the danger zone?

The “danger zone” is when food is kept between 5°C and 60°C. In this temperature range, germs can grow quickly and increase the risk of illness.

What are the 5 Keys to Safer Food?

1. Keep clean

- Wash your hands, surfaces, and utensils regularly.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with clean water.
- Keep your kitchen clean to reduce the spread of germs.

2. Separate raw and cooked food

- Keep raw foods, such as meat, chicken, and fish, away from cooked or ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.
- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods.

3. Cook food thoroughly

- Cook food completely, especially meat, chicken, eggs, and seafood.
- Make sure food is hot all the way before eating.
- Reheat food until it is very hot.
- Cook food properly to kill harmful germs.
- Cover food while reheating it in the microwave to help it cook evenly.
- Stir or rotate food during heating to avoid cold spots where germs can survive.

4. Keep food at safe temperatures

- Keep hot food at a temperature above the danger zone (above 60°C) if you want to keep it hot, and below the danger zone (below 5°C) if you want to keep it cold.
- Refrigerate food as soon as possible after cooking.
- Avoid leaving food out at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Store food at safe temperatures to prevent germs from multiplying.
- Thaw frozen food safely in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave. Never thaw food on the counter.

5. Use safe water and proper ingredients

- Use clean, safe water for cooking and washing food.
- Choose fresh, good-quality ingredients.
- Check expiry dates before eating food.
- Throw away food that looks or smells unsafe.

How to keep my food safe in the refrigerator?

- It's important to keep its temperature at 5°C or below; the freezer should be at -18°C.
- Avoid "Overpacking." Cold air must circulate around refrigerated foods to keep them properly chilled.
- Wipe Up Spills Immediately.
- Store refrigerated foods in covered containers or sealed storage bags, and check leftovers daily for spoilage.
- Clean the fridge out frequently.

Food Allergies:

- Some people may have allergies to certain foods, which can cause harmful reactions.
- Common food allergens include milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soy, and sesame.
- Always check food labels for allergen information before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid using the same utensils, cutting boards, or surfaces for allergenic foods and other foods to reduce the risk of cross-contact.
- If someone has a known food allergy, avoid foods that contain the allergen and follow the advice provided by their healthcare provider.

What is food poisoning?

Food poisoning, a type of foodborne illness, is a sickness people get from something they ate or drank. The causes are germs or other harmful things in the food or drink.

What are the symptoms of food poisoning?

Food poisoning can cause:

- Stomach pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever

Symptoms may appear within a few hours or after a few days.

How food poisoning happen?

Food poisoning is caused by eating something that has been contaminated with germs.

This can happen if food is:

- Not cooked or reheated thoroughly
- Not stored correctly, for example, it's not frozen or chilled
- Left out for too long
- Handled by someone who's ill or has not washed their hands
- Eaten after its "use by" date

Any type of food can cause food poisoning.

What to do in case of food poisoning?

- Stay at home and get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of fluids, such as water or squash. Take small sips if you feel sick.
- Give babies on formula or solid foods small sips of water between feeds.
- Eat when you feel able to. It may help to avoid foods that are fatty or spicy.
- Do not have fruit juice or fizzy drinks. They can make diarrhea worse.
- Do not give children under 12 medicine to stop diarrhea.
- Do not give aspirin to children under 16.

Who is at higher risk of getting sick?

Some groups are more likely to become seriously ill from unsafe food:

- Children
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- People with weakened immune systems

These groups should take extra care with food safety.

When to seek help?

See a doctor if you have any symptoms that are severe, including:

- Bloody diarrhea
- Diarrhea that lasts more than 3 days
- High fever (temperature over 38.9°C)
- Vomiting so often that you cannot keep liquids down
- Signs of dehydration, which include not urinating (peeing) much, a dry mouth and throat, and/or feeling dizzy when standing up

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