

Myth#9: I had dinner at a restaurant and an hour later I got flu-like symptoms. The food at the restaurant must have been "bad".

Busted!! Not always true. The most common food borne illnesses, such as Shigella, E. coli, and salmonella, the incubation period is 16-48 hours so it takes 1-2 days before you will begin to feel ill. The food you ate 1-2 days is probably the culprit.

Myth #10: The most important part of a food establishment inspection is ensuring that all the equipment (such as sinks, refrigerators, freezers) is brand new.

Busted!! Definitely not true. We pay particular attention to four major areas of concerns:

1. Foods frequently associated with food borne illnesses.
2. Foods prepared in large volumes.
3. "Ready to eat" foods that will be served without any further cooking or processing. With these foods, food workers must use a barrier between their hands and the food. A "barrier" could be tongs, bakery papers, or gloves.
4. "Complex recipes" that involve multiple ingredients or that are assembled or mixed, like salads and sandwiches. These recipes create the greatest risk of food borne illness because the food will be handled several times.

Making sure the equipment is working properly and holding the proper temperature is the most important when it comes to equipment.



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Food

A Quarterly newsletter from your local
health department



Inside:

Top 10 Myth Busters about Food Safety Issues

Top 10 Myth busters about Food Safety!!

Myth #1: When I make potato salad, I boil the potatoes the day before and leave them on the counter to cool overnight. But since mayonnaise will go bad, I leave the mayo in the fridge until it is time to mix the ingredients together.

Busted!! Never leave potatoes to cool on the counter. Bacteria can grow on cooked starch foods like potatoes and other foods such as rice, beans and pasta. Always cool the potatoes in a refrigerator and mix all ingredients cold.

Please note that commercially-made mayonnaise is required by the government to have vinegar or lemon juice as one ingredient, and these slow bacteria from growing due to its high acidity. Keeping mayo in the fridge is best however so it doesn't separate and turn into "yellow jello".

Myth #2: To protect my family while doing food preparation after having had diarrhea or vomiting, all I need to do is wash my hands.

Busted!! When you are ill, it is best to keep away from any food preparation. However, washing your hands and then wearing gloves or using alternative barriers such as tongs or spoons is necessary since you don't wash off all the bacteria from your hands. If possible, have someone else do the food prep when you are ill.

Myth #3: I can use hand-sanitizer instead of washing my hands.

Busted!! Think again. Although hand sanitizers can effectively kill some bacteria on your hands, they do little to reduce the surface tension between your skin and bacteria/dirt/grease. The sanitizer only has an effect on the outer layer of film on your hands. Some bacteria are still present on your hands so you will still need to properly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.

Myth #4: I don't need to wash my produce since the grocery store mists the produce during display.

Busted!! Wrong. This type of light rinsing of produce will not remove germs from the soil where produce is grown or from contact by store and field workers. Did they wash their hands after using the toilet, and then proceed to touch your food?

Myth #5: The chicken was cooked in the oven at 375°F and is no longer pink, so the chicken must be fully cooked.

Busted!! No! It is how much heat is in the middle of the meat that matters. Use a thermometer and insert into the thickest part of the meat. When the thermometer reads 165°F (for chicken) then you know it is done. Always cook the following meats to their proper internal temperatures.

- Poultry and Stuffing; 165°F
- Pork: 145°F
- Beef, Lamb and Seafood: 145°F
- Rare Beef: 130°F
- Hamburger (ground beef): 155°F

Reheat all meats to 165°F or hotter. Remember, it is the internal temperature of the meat that counts, not the oven temperature.



Myth #6: This restaurant is not spotless, therefore, the food must not be safe to eat.

Busted!! Although cleanliness is imperative, it is more important that food safety practices are evaluated to determine whether food is safe. Hot foods must be kept hot (140°F), cold foods must be kept cold (41°F or below). Food workers must wash their hands and make sure utensils are cleaned between raw and ready-to-eat food preparation.

Myth #7: You can tell if food will make you sick because it will smell bad, taste bad, have mold on it, or be slimy.

Busted!! No! Bad smell, bad taste and slime are signs that the food has lost its quality, but not that it has the bacteria to cause food borne illness. The bacteria and toxins that cause foodborne illness do not change the smell or taste of the food. You cannot see if the food is contaminated. Only proper preparation, cooking and storage lowers the risk of foodborne illness.

Myth #8: The "sell-by date" has passed, so food is not safe and should be pulled from the sales case.

Busted!! Pull dates are set and established by the WSDOA (Washington State Department of Agriculture) for all perishable packaged goods that have a shelf life of 30 days or less because they have a high risk of spoilage. It is legal though to sell products that have exceeded their "pull" date. If the product is being sold past the "pull" date, the retailer is required to verify that the product continues to appear wholesome and is without danger to health. These products need to be clearly identified as having passed the pull date.