

Avoiding food poisoning starts in your own kitchen

By ACSH Staff — August 27, 2013



^[1]Eating contaminated food results in foodborne illness in about one in

every six Americans each year, and about 70 percent of those cases are caused by unsanitary behaviors that people do in their own kitchens. [In her column](#) ^[2] in the *New York Times* Science section this week, Jane Brody gives some advice on practices home chefs (or even snackers) can adopt to avoid these illnesses.

She begins by discussing how to shop safely and includes advice such as making sure the stores at which you shop are clean and well-organized, picking up dry products first and having dry foods bagged separately from produce. In terms of storage, she encourages separating raw meats, poultry and fish from other refrigerated products, as well as organizing your pantry so that the oldest products are used up before newer ones. When preparing foods, Brody advises making sure to wash hands before handling food, as well as after sneezing since it is not uncommon to have *Staphylococcus* bacteria in nasal passages. She also recommends separate cutting boards for produce and meats to avoid cross-contamination. And when cooking food, always use a food thermometer to ensure food is thoroughly cooked. Also, if serving food buffet style, use hot plates or cold trays and refrigerate leftovers as soon as possible.

And of course, keep your cooking areas clean. Wash kitchen sponges and dishcloths often, and clean the refrigerator, stove-tops and countertops as well.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky adds, Jane Brody goes into a lot of detail about steps that can be taken to prevent illness from foods you prepare. It may seem like an overdose of minutiae to bear in mind, but the steps are really not so hard to implement and the fact that 70 percent of food poisoning is caused by unsanitary kitchen practices really makes it necessary to follow the advice she provides, and which we here at ACSH endorse.

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[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/fridge.jpg>

[2] http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/26/keeping-food-borne-illnesses-at-bay/?_r=1