

# Separate

Cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards, utensils, etc., if they are not handled properly. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood, so keep these foods and their juices away from already cooked or ready-to-eat foods and fresh produce. When handling foods, it is important to Be Smart, Keep Foods Apart—Don't Cross-Contaminate. By following these simple steps, you can prevent cross-contamination and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

**When Shopping:** Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery-shopping cart. Place these foods in plastic bags to prevent their juices from dripping onto other foods. It is also best to separate these foods from other foods at check out and in your grocery bags.

## When Refrigerating Food:

- Place raw meat, poultry, and seafood in containers or sealed plastic bags to prevent their juices from dripping onto other foods. Raw juices often contain harmful bacteria.
- Store eggs in their original carton and refrigerate as soon as possible.

**When Preparing Food:** Wash hands and surfaces often. Harmful bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, and counter tops. To prevent this:

- Wash hands with soap and hot water before and after handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling pets.
- Use hot, soapy water and paper towels or clean cloths to wipe up kitchen surfaces or spills. Wash cloths often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, and counter tops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next item.
- A solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach in 1 quart of water may be used to sanitize surfaces and utensils.

## Cutting Boards:

- Always use a clean cutting board.
- If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Once cutting boards become excessively worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves, you should replace them.

## Marinating Food:

- Always marinate food in the refrigerator, not on the counter.
- Sauce that is used to marinate raw meat, poultry, or seafood should not be used on cooked foods, unless it is boiled just before using.

## When Serving Food:

- Always use a clean plate.
- Never place cooked food back on the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw food.

## When Storing Leftovers:

- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers within 2 hours or sooner in clean, shallow, covered containers to prevent harmful bacteria from multiplying.