

Food poisoning can result from eating contaminated food. Most food poisoning results from incorrect handling, storage and cooking of food. You can help protect yourself by following basic food safety guidelines.

Food handling

- Always wash your hands with soap and dry well before handling and/or eating food.
- Wash utensils and work surfaces before and after use.
- Use separate chopping boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods. Prepare raw meats and other foods separately. Clean chopping boards and utensils with hot, soapy water after each use.
- Wash fruits and vegetables well.
- Keep pets/pests out of the kitchen and away from all food and preparation areas.

Food storage

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate.
- Store raw foods at the bottom of the fridge on a plate or in a container to avoid dripping.
- If you cannot remember how long something has been in the fridge, throw it out.
- As general guide you can keep meat, chicken and seafood in the fridge for up to three days. You can keep leftovers in the fridge for 3-5 days.
- Never eat food past the 'use by' date. Foods with a 'best before date' should be eaten before this date.
- Don't eat foods from damaged, swollen or dented cans.
- Use a cooler bag and ice packs if you need to transport food

Temperature control

- Keep hot food hot (above 60°C) and cold food cold (at or below 5°C).
- Ensure cooked food is hot throughout.
- Reheat food until piping hot and never reheat more than once. Microwave cooking can result in uneven heating of food. Always ensure food is hot all the way through.
- Follow cooking methods and reheating instructions on packaged foods.
- If you are not going to eat food straight away, cover it and put it in the fridge.
- Defrost foods in the fridge or microwave. Do not defrost foods on the kitchen bench.
- If you have defrosted food, do not refreeze it.
- Use an esky or cooler bag and ice packs if you need to travel more than half an hour or if the weather is warm.
- Keep your refrigerator clean and ensure the temperature is below 5°C.
- Refrigerate leftover foods immediately (don't leave out on the bench to cool)

Take home messages

- Food safety is important to protect you and others from food poisoning.
- Make sure you handle, store and cook foods by following these tips.