Eating Safe, Eating Smart

Food safety is everyone's business. To make sure that you protect your family from foodborne illnesses, take action every day at each step of food preparation in your own kitchen.

You can't see, taste or smell bacteria that can cause illness. But, it's easy to fight bac! All you need is a thermometer and these tricks to keep you and your family safe.

Clean - Wash hands for 20 seconds with water and soap before and after handling food. Clean cutting boards and countertops often - especially after cutting raw meats, seafood and poultry. Use a solution of 1 tablespoon unscented bleach mixed with 1 gallon water. Wash fresh produce under cold tap water to remove dirt. If the produce has a thick skin, scrub the surface with a brush. Cut away any bruised or damaged parts - this is where bacteria thrive.

Separate - Keep raw meats, seafood, poultry and their juices away from other foods. Store these on the bottom shelf in the refrigerator to avoid juices dripping onto other foods. Use separate cutting boards for produce, cooked foods and breads than ones used for raw meat, seafood and poultry.

Cook - What's worse than sitting down to dinner, slicing into your chicken and finding it still pink in the middle? Take out the guess work and cook all meats to the correct temperature to kill bacteria. Cook beef, fish, lamb and roasts to 145 degrees F (this is where a meat thermometer comes in handy), pork to 160 degrees F, ground meats to 160 degrees F and poultry to 165 degrees F.

How about take-out food or your restaurant leftovers? Throw it out if it has been at room temperature for 2 hours or longer. Refrigerate all foods within 2 hours after cooking. Larger portions, for example a ham or mashed potatoes leftover from your dinner party, should be divided or sliced into smaller portions to chill more quickly in the refrigerator.

When it comes to reheating foods there are a few things to remember. Eat prepared foods within 3 to 4 days if they have been stored properly. Reheat foods to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Always use a food thermometer to check the temperature of your foods.

Remember, when in doubt, throw it out!

Source: Eat Smart Move More
An eco-healthy home is one that has very few environmental hazards inside or out. Children are more vulnerable than adults to health hazards from pesticides, smoke and other environmental toxins. Their bodies are smaller and developing quickly and they play on or near the ground, a place where toxins are likely to collect. Like children, pregnant women are also vulnerable and should avoid pesticides and harsh chemicals used for cleaning and home maintenance.

**Make lawns safe for children**
- Avoid insecticides and weed killers.
- Use organic fertilizer.
- Mow high and water deeply, but infrequently.
- If neighbors use weed killers, keep children away from their grass for a few days.
- If a lawn care service is used, choose one that avoids using chemicals.

**Limit pesticide use**
- Practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to prevent and control pest damage. It is cost-effective, uses little or no pesticides, is environmentally sound, and is safe for human health.
- Put food and trash in closed containers to reduce pests.
- Choose alternatives or use low toxicity baits and traps. Place them safely away from children and pets.
- If pesticides are used, follow directions carefully.
- Use non-toxic head lice treatments.
- Follow safety precautions when using insect repellants containing DEET. Use the lowest concentration and amount needed to be effective.

**Practice safe cleaning and home maintenance**
- Use low VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) paint.
- Keep area well ventilated when painting or renovating.
- Choose renovation products (like carpets, paints, or wood products) which do not discharge pollutants.
- Use non-toxic cleaning products.
- Air out items from the dry cleaner before bringing them into the home, or ask for “wet-cleaning”.

**Eat wisely**
- Increase organic food in the family’s diet.
- Wash and/or peel non-organic produce to reduce exposure to pesticide residues.
- Provide a healthy, well-balanced diet. It boosts the body’s immune system and resistance to disease.

**Breathe easier**
- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in the home or car.
- Check the home’s ventilation, making sure indoor pollutants do not build up inside the home.
- Eliminate mold or mildew problems.
- Eliminate asthma triggers such as carpets, heavy drapes, and pet dander, if someone in the household has asthma.

**Avoid exposure to lead**
- Wipe feet or remove shoes before coming into the house.
- Wash hands before meals and wash bottles, pacifiers and toys often.
- Homes built before 1978 should be inspected for chipping lead paint. Follow recommendations on how to stabilize the paint as soon as chipping occurs.
- Test children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years for lead exposure.
- Use a water filter or run water for 30 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking.

**Limit mercury exposure**
- Use non-mercury thermometers.
- Dispose of mercury-containing products and other toxic products at the county hazardous waste site.
- Follow the US Food and Drug Administration’s guidelines for eating fish, found on: www.cfsan.fda.gov/seafood1.html.

**Avoid vinyl products**
- Dispose of children’s toys and vinyl products that contain lead and cadmium.
- Replace infant soft plastic vinyl chew toys with non-vinyl alternatives.
- Replace vinyl mini-blinds manufactured before 1996. They may contain lead.
- Avoid plastics with the letter “V” or numbers 3, 5 or 6 on them. They contain toxins that have a negative effect on human health, especially children’s health.

**Keep safe radon levels**
- Test the home for radon. Home test kits are available.
- If the radon level is 4 pCi/L or higher, treat the home for radon reduction.
North Carolinians are familiar with mildew, that thin growth of fungus that grows on many kinds of surfaces. Mildew grows when the spores of molds settle on a welcoming surface. It commonly develops on areas that are damp, warm, poorly ventilated, and dark, and it thrives in warm, humid weather. Bathrooms, closets, basements, and crawl spaces are prime sites. A musty odor often indicates mildew.

Mildew is a greater problem when the weather is warm and the relative humidity is 60 percent or more for several days. It is also a problem when moisture is trapped in an area in your home. Take special precautions to prevent mildew growth if either of these conditions occur. Prevent mildew by keeping surfaces dry, clean, and well ventilated. To prevent excess moisture:

- Turn on air conditioners when relative humidity is 50 percent or above. Humidity is given in the weather forecast. Air conditioning helps remove moisture from the air. Make sure air conditioner condensation drains outside and away from the foundation of the house.
- Install sheets of polyethylene in crawlspaces. Open vents in foundation walls. Cover 70 to 80 percent of the ground under the house with 6-mil plastic. Weigh the plastic down along the foundation wall.
- Ventilate the attic. Continuous soffit and ridge vents in combination are recommended. Attic fans may also be used.
- Use ventilating fans in the kitchen and bathroom. Make sure these fans vent to the outdoors, not to the attic, crawl or living spaces. Run the fans while cooking and bathing, and 15 to 20 minutes after bathing.
- Combustion appliances can contribute to excess moisture in the home. Vent a gas heater or gas logs to the outside using an approved flue.
- Vent clothes dryers to the outside of the house, never to the attic, crawl or living spaces.
- Do not let damp or wet clothes lie around the house.
- Clean or wash clothes before storing. Mildew begins on spots and stains.
- Stretch out a wet shower curtain after every shower.
- When necessary, use chemicals to control humidity by absorbing moisture. Silica gel, activated alumina, and calcium chloride can be purchased in drug stores and department stores. Put in an open box and place in the closet, but keep it out of reach of children.
- Keep closet lights on. A 40- to 60-watt bulb uses a very small amount of electricity.
- Use a dehumidifier. These are especially useful in basements and other naturally cool areas of the house during humid summer months when you may need to run the unit continuously. Make certain that you remove water and clean humidifier daily. Only use a dehumidifier with an Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Seal.
- Wax leather goods. Wax will protect leather from mildew. Spray-on fungicides are also available for leathers and fabrics. Follow the label instructions.
- Trim shrubs growing close to the house. They often prevent good air circulation and hold dampness.
- Thoroughly remove any mildew from the exterior of a house before repainting. If this is not done, the mildew will grow through the new paint coat. Scrub the painted surface with a bristle brush or sponge using the following solution: 1/3 cup of household detergent, 1 to 2 quarts of liquid household bleach (5 percent sodium hypochlorite), and 2 to 3 quarts of warm water. This mixture can also be used to remove mildew from naturally finished or unfinished wood.

WARNING: Do not mix liquid household bleach with ammonia or with any detergents or cleansers containing ammonia. Bleach and ammonia form a lethal gas. Many household cleaners contain ammonia, so be extremely careful what type of cleaner is mixed with bleach.

If mildewed wood is refinished without cleaning the surface, the mildew can grow through the new coating. Then it is usually impossible to control the mildew. The entire paint coat should be stripped, scrubbed with the above solution, rinsed, allowed to dry, treated with a water-repellent preservative, and refinished with mildew-resistant paint.

Source: North Carolina Cooperative Extension
When funds are short and prices continue to rise, you may have a difficult time stretching your food dollars. If you find yourself in this situation, don’t give up on healthy eating. Planning ahead and taking a few short cuts will save both your time and your food dollars. It’s worth the effort for better health to learn to stretch your food dollars.

Here are some ideas to help you get started.
♦ Prepare a shopping list before going grocery shopping. A list will help you avoid impulse purchases and will also help prevent extra trips to the store. A good idea is to keep a note pad near the cupboard or refrigerator to write down out-of-stock items to buy on your next trip to the grocery store. Go shopping as few times as possible. Frequent trips add to family food costs because we tend to buy extras each time.
♦ Check the store ads and be on the lookout for store specials. Buy foods, such as fruits, vegetables and fish when they are on sale. Foods are often on sale when they are in-season and at their freshest, an extra benefit. Buy an advertised meat special to use for several meals. Freeze portions for later use. It’s a good idea to keep a supply on hand for bad weather or illness.
♦ Stretch meats by using them in sauces or casseroles. You may also purchase less expensive cuts and tenderize them by slow-cooking and marinating.
♦ Stock up on staples like flour, rice and pasta when they are on special.
♦ Don’t shop for groceries when you are hungry. You will be more likely to give into temptation and purchase expensive items that you don’t really need and are usually less nutritious.
♦ Shop alone if possible. It’s hard to say no to the children’s favorite foods when they are with you.
♦ Read labels and compare prices to get the best buy. Be sure to use unit pricing. The unit pricing labels tell the cost per unit of measure such as ounce, serving or pound. Use this to compare brands and different size packages to get the most food per dollar.
♦ Use coupons, but only for products you normally buy. Coupons can gobble up both time and money, if used unwisely.
♦ Incorporate less meat and more beans into your meals. Canned beans, such as kidney or garbanzo, may be easier to use than dried beans.
♦ Use nonfat dry milk for cooking instead of whole milk. Dry milk is equally nutritious, and can be less expensive.
♦ Set your food budget for the week. Your goal will be to reduce your food bill by 5% each week until you reach a level that fits your family’s needs and budget.
♦ Always go shopping with a hand calculator. Add prices as you place items in the basket. This will help avoid surprises at the check-out.
♦ Eliminate the high fat and high calorie snacks. Replace them with more healthy selections such as vegetables and fruits which will be less expensive and more healthy.
♦ If storage allows, shop in bulk quantities for non-food items such as paper products, cleansers, bathroom supplies and the like. Many member warehouses offer significant reductions for these items.
♦ Stock your pantry and refrigerator with easy to prepare foods to save both money and time. Start with staples – staples are foods you eat all the time, maybe even every day. Keep your pantry, refrigerator and freezer well stocked with your favorite basic foods. This will eliminate extra trips to the grocery store and you will be able to make healthy meals fast.

Source: Oregon Cooperative Extension, Colorado Cooperative Extension