

## Preparing Safe Food

Lack of proper food preparation and storage is a common cause of food-related illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that harmful food-borne bacteria cause millions of illnesses and thousands of deaths every year, all of which can lead to a hefty liability claim, if you are not taking proper precautions. The CDC and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have established strict guidelines regarding the storage and handling of poultry, meat, and shellfish products.

The **Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE)** offers some easy-to-follow recommendations on **fightbac.org**, to support compliance with the CDC and FDA guidelines.

- **Clean: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often**

- Always start with a clean scene – wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, as well as after using the bathroom.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item, and before handling any other food.
- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you are using cloth towels, wash them frequently in the hot cycle of a washing machine.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables, or scrub with a clean vegetable brush, while rinsing with running tap water.
- Remember to rinse fresh fruits and vegetables with skins and rinds that are not eaten under running tap water.

- **Separate: Don't Cross-Contaminate**

- When handling raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs, keep these foods and their juices away from other foods.
- Use separate cutting boards for fresh produce, raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

- **Cook: Heat to Proper Temperatures**

- Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food-borne illness.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm not runny. Avoid recipes that use raw or partially cooked eggs.

- **Chill: Refrigerate Promptly**

- Refrigerate foods quickly; cold temperatures slow the growth of harmful bacteria.
- Do not over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to help keep food safe. Keeping a constant temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of food-borne illness.
- Maintain a temperature of zero degrees Fahrenheit or below in the freezer.

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If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at [safety1st@markelcorp.com](mailto:safety1st@markelcorp.com).