

Can Your Kitchen Pass the Food Safety Test?

Choose the answer that best describes the practice in your household, whether or not you are the primary food handler. Write down or keep track of your answers, correct answers are given at the end of the quiz.

1. The temperature of the refrigerator in my home is:

- A. 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius)
- B. 41 F (5 C)
- C. I don't know; I've never measured it

2. The last time we had leftover cooked stew or other food with meat, chicken, fish or cooked vegetables the food was:

- A. Cooled to room temperature, then put in the refrigerator
- B. Put in the refrigerator immediately after the food was served
- C. Left at room temperature overnight or longer

3. The last time the kitchen sink drain, disposal and connecting pipe in my home were sanitized was:

- A. Last night
- B. Several weeks ago
- C. Can't remember

4. If a cutting board is used in my home to cut raw meat, poultry or fish and it is going to be used to chop another food, the board is:

- A. Reused as is
- B. Wiped with a damp cloth
- C. Washed with soap and hot water and sanitized with a mild chlorine bleach solution

5. The last time we had hamburgers in my home, I ate mine:

- A. Rare
- B. Medium
- C. Well-done

6. The last time there was cookie dough in my home, the dough was:

- A. Made with raw eggs, and I sampled some of it
- B. Store-bought, and sampled some of it
- C. Not sampled until baked

7. I clean my kitchen counters and other surfaces that come in contact with food with:

- A. Water
- B. Hot water and soap
- C. Hot water and soap, then a bleach solution
- D. Hot water and soap, then commercial sanitizing agent

8. When dishes are washed in my home, they are:

- A. Cleaned by an automatic dishwasher and then air-dried
- B. Left to soak in the sink for several hours and then washed with soap in the same water
- C. Washed right away with hot water and soap in the sink and then air-dried
- D. Washed right away with hot water and soap in the sink and immediately towel-dried

9. The last time I handled raw meat, poultry or fish, I cleaned my hands afterward by:

- A. Wiping them on a towel
- B. Rinsing then under hot, cold or warm water
- C. Washing with soap and warm water for 20 seconds

10. Meat, poultry and fish products are defrosted in my home by:

- A. Setting them on the counter
- B. Placing them in the refrigerator
- C. Using a microwave

Answers

1. **Answer B, two points.** Refrigerators should stay at 41 F (5 C) or less. Measure the temperature with a thermometer and, if needed, adjust the refrigerator's temperature control dial. A temperature of 41 F or less is important because it slows the growth of most bacteria. The temperature won't kill the bacteria, but it will keep it from multiplying, and the fewer there are the less likely you are to get sick.

Freezing at zero F (minus 18 C) or less stops bacterial growth, although it won't kill all bacteria already present. Cooking and reheating foods to at least 165° F is the best way to kill foodborne bacteria.

2. **Answer B, two points.** Hot foods should be refrigerated as soon as possible within two hours after cooking. But don't keep the food if it's been standing out for more than two hours. Don't taste test it, either. Even small amount of contaminated food can cause illness.

Date leftovers so they can be used within a safe time. Generally, they remain safe when refrigerated for three-to-five days. **If in doubt, throw it out.**

3. **Answer A, two points. Answer B, one point.** According to the Food and Drug Administration, the kitchen sink drain, disposal and connecting pipe are often overlooked, but they should be sanitized periodically by pouring down the sink a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach, one quart of water or a solution of commercial kitchen cleaning agent made according to product directions. Food particles get trapped in the drain and disposal and along with the moistness, create an ideal environment for bacterial growth.

4. **Answer C, two points.** This answer should best describe your household practice. Washing with soap and hot water and then sanitizing with a mild bleach solution is the safest practice. Never allow raw meat, poultry and fish to come in contact with other foods especially foods that

are ready to eat or will not be cooked. Improper washing, such as using a damp cloth, will not remove bacteria.

5. **Answer C, two points.** The safest way to eat hamburgers is to cook them until they are no longer red in the middle and the juices run clear. That doesn't happen with rare-cooked meats, and it may not happen with medium-cooked ones. Cooking food, including ground meat patties, to an internal temperature of at least 160 F usually protects against food-borne illness. Well-done meats reach that temperature.

To be on the safe side, check cooked meat, poultry and fish with a meat thermometer to ensure that they have reached a safe internal temperature.

For microwaved food, follow directions, included the standing time, either in or out of the microwave after cooking. Microwave cooking creates pockets of heat in the food, but allowing the food to stand before eating allows the heat to spread to the rest of the food.

6. **Answer B and C, two points.** Since almost half of raw chicken and uncooked or non-pasteurized eggs or food containing eggs contain the *Salmonella enteritidis* bacterium, you should cook eggs to at least 140 F to kill the bacteria.

So, answers B or C are the most correct answers. If you answered A, you may be putting yourself at risk for infection with *Salmonella enteritidis*. Homemade food containing raw eggs, such as homemade ice cream, cake batter, mayonnaise, and eggnog, carry a *Salmonella* risk, but their commercial counterparts don't. Commercial products are made with pasteurized eggs; that is, eggs that have been heated sufficiently to kill bacteria. Commercial preparations of cookie dough are not a food hazard.

If you want to sample homemade dough or batter or eat foods with raw eggs, consider substituting pasteurized eggs for raw eggs. Pasteurized eggs are usually sold in the grocer's dairy case.

7. **Answers C and D are the best choices, two points. Answer B, one point.** According to the FDA, bleach and commercial kitchen agents are the best sanitizers - provided they're used properly. They are the most effective at getting rid of bacteria. Hot water and soap does a good job, too, but may not kill all strains of bacteria. Water may get rid of visible dirt, but not bacteria.

Also, be sure to keep dishcloths and sponges clean because, when wet, these materials harbor bacteria and may promote their growth. Wash cloths regularly and put sponges in the dishwasher.

8. **Answer A and C are the best choices, two points.** There are potential problems with answers B and D. When you let dishes sit in water for a long time, it creates a bacterial stew. The food left on the dish contributes nutrients for bacteria, so the bacteria will multiply. When washing dishes by hand it is generally best to wash them all within two hours. It is also best to air-dry them so you don't handle them while they're wet.

9. The only correct practice is answer C, two points. Give yourself two points if you picked it. Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, especially raw meat, poultry, and fish. If you have an infection or cut on your hands, wear rubber or plastic gloves. Wash gloved hands just as often as bare hands because the gloves can pick up bacteria. (However, when washing gloves hands, you don't need to take off your gloves and wash your bare hands, too.)

10. Give yourself two points if you picked B or C. Food safety experts recommend thawing foods in the refrigerator, the microwave oven or putting the package in a water-tight plastic bag submerged in cold water and changing the water every 30 minutes. Changing the water ensures that the food is kept cold, an important factor for slowing bacterial growth that may occur on the outer thawed portions while the inner areas are still thawing.

When using the microwave, follow package directions. Leave about two inches between the food and the inside surface of the microwave to allow heat to circulate. Smaller items will defrost more evenly than larger pieces of food. Foods defrosted in the microwave oven should be cooked immediately after thawing.

Do not thaw meat, poultry and fish products on the counter or in the sink without cold water; bacteria can multiply rapidly at room temperatures.

Rating Your Home's Food Practice

20 points: Feel confident about the safety of food served in your home.

12 to 19 points: Re-examine food safety practices in your home. Some key rules are being violated.

11 points or below: Take steps immediately to correct food handling, storage and cooking techniques used in your home. Current practices are putting you and other members of your household in danger of food-borne illness.