

Staying Healthy in the Kitchen

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DENVER — Anyone who has ever gotten a touch of food poisoning will tell you that spending the night hugging the toilet isn't a pleasant experience. Food-borne illness can leave you weak and unable to function. Food-borne illnesses are not entirely avoidable, but you can greatly lower your risks when armed with the proper knowledge and tools for prevention. Angela Rossi, Director of Clinical Nutrition Services at National Jewish Health provides the following tips to avoid food borne illness during the food preparation process.

Do not consume food or beverages while preparing food. The potential for cross-contamination occurs while eating or drinking during the food prep process. When the hands touch the mouth area while eating food, or the hands touch the lip of a glass where the mouth was, and then your hands touch the food again the opportunity exists to pass germs and bacteria.

Use multiple cutting boards. Consistently using dedicated cutting boards for the different food groups. One for raw beef, one for raw poultry, one for produce and one for dry goods prevents each food group from coming in contact with another food's bacteria. Wash each board thoroughly after each use.

Don't forget about your refrigerator. When defrosting foods like raw beef or poultry in your refrigerator, place them on a drip catching tray, on the lowest shelf available. Potentially hazardous foods should not be placed higher than other foods in the fridge, because the blood drippings created can drip onto and contaminate other foods below.

Use multiple towels. Do not use the same dish towel for wiping hands or countertops if you are working with foods that are potentially hazardous. Bacteria on the towel can be transferred again later onto hands or around surfaces. Also be careful when wearing an apron as they can also collect and transfer bacteria when you absentmindedly wipe hands on it repeatedly.

Wash your hands. Good hand washing practices cannot be stressed enough. Be mindful of when you need to wash your hands during the food prep process:

After handling potentially hazardous foods; after coughing, sneezing, smoking, using the bathroom, eating or drinking.

Before eating and before handling ready to eat foods. Before grabbing shredded cheese out of a bag, or deli meat from the packaging, shared bags of chips, etc... It is easy to contaminate a whole bag of product with dirty hands, that others share and eat from too.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 120 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

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