FIGHT BAC!

Four Simple Steps to Food Safety

Right now, there may be an invisible enemy ready to strike. He's called BAC (bacteria) and he can make you and those you care about sick. In fact, even though you can't see BAC - or smell him, or feel him - he and millions more like him may have already invaded the food you eat.

But you have the power to *Fight BAC!™* and to keep your food safe from harmful bacteria. It's as easy as following these four simple steps:

Clean:
Wash hands and surfaces often

Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, sponges and counter tops. Here's how to *Fight BAC!™*:

- Wash your hands with hot soapy water before handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets.

- Wash your cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.

- Use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards. These boards should be run through the dishwasher - or washed in hot soapy water - after use.

- Consider using paper towels to clean up kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.

Separate:
Don't Cross-Contaminate

Cross-contamination is the scientific word for how bacteria can be spread from one food product to another. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry and seafood, so keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. Here's how to *Fight BAC!™*:

- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.

- If possible, use a different cutting board for raw meat products.
- Always wash hands, cutting boards, dishes and utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Never place cooked food on a plate which previously held raw meat, poultry and seafood.

Cook:
Cook to proper temperatures
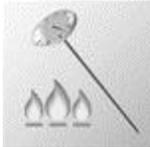
Food safety experts agree that foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. The best way to *Fight BAC!*^{TM} is to:

- Use a clean thermometer, which measures the internal temperature of cooked foods, to make sure meat, poultry, casseroles and other foods are cooked all the way through.
- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145°F. Whole poultry should be cooked to 180°F for doneness.
- Cook ground beef, where bacteria can spread during processing, to at least 160°F. Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) link eating undercooked, pink ground beef with a higher risk of illness. If a thermometer is not available, do not eat ground beef that is still pink inside.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Don't use recipes in which eggs remain raw or only partially cooked.
- Fish should be opaque and flake easily with a fork.
- When cooking in a microwave oven, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive . For best results, cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking. If there is no turntable, rotate the dish by hand once or twice during cooking.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating. Heat other leftovers thoroughly to at least 165°F.

Chill:
Refrigerate Promptly

Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. So, set your refrigerator no higher than 40°F and the freezer unit at 0°F. Check these temperatures occasionally with an appliance thermometer. Then, *Fight BAC!*^{TM} by following these steps:

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods and leftovers within two hours or sooner.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave. Marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quick cooling in the refrigerator.
- Don't pack the refrigerator. Cool air must circulate to keep food safe.