

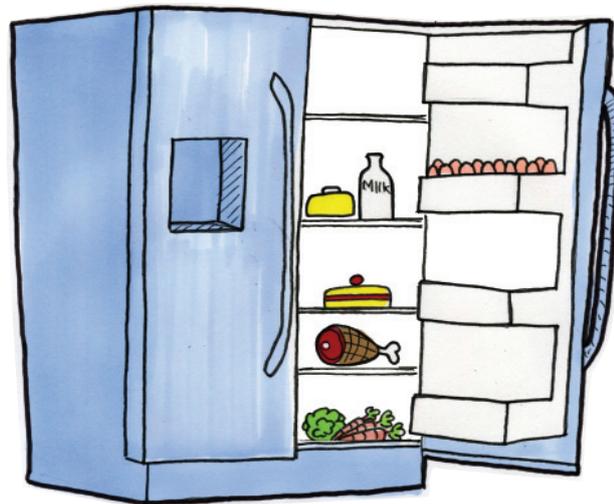
FOOD SAFETY: AVOIDING CROSS-CONTAMINATION



Some foods are naturally much higher in bacteria than others, and need to be handled with extra care. Raw meat and fish are the most important ones to look out for, as the bacteria found on them can easily lead to food poisoning if it's allowed to spread to other foods.

Imagine for a minute that you're cooking grilled chicken and salad for dinner. If you chop up the raw chicken on a chopping board before cooking it, then use that same knife and board to prepare your salad, the salad will be contaminated with bacteria from the uncooked chicken. This is called 'cross-contamination' and here are the golden rules for avoiding it:

- Store raw meat and fish on the bottom shelf of your fridge, and store food that is ready to be eaten whether it's salad, cheese, dairy or cooked food on the shelves above. This is so the juices from the raw foods can't drip onto cooked foods and cross-contaminate them.
- If you're preparing raw meat, chicken or fish on a chopping board, wash the board, the knife and your hands thoroughly afterwards so that the bacteria doesn't spread onto food that is cooked or ready to eat. Some restaurants have different coloured chopping boards for raw and cooked foods, or for meat, fish and veg, to minimise the chances of this happening. These are readily available from loads of home and kitchen stores so you might like to try this at home.
- Be aware that there may be germs and bacteria in the soil on any dirty muddy vegetables. Peel them in the sink, rinse them well before use then remember to clean the sink and your hands before you do anything else.
- Once meat, chicken or fish are cooked, lift them out of the pan and serve them using clean implements that haven't touched any raw food. This applies to barbecuing too; it's a scary thing to see the same tongs that put raw chicken on the barbecue one minute, lift off cooked chicken the next!



- Wash your hands after touching anything that might have bacteria on it, like the dustbin or the dog, and never ever forget to wash your hands after going to the bathroom!
- Keep the work surfaces in your kitchen clean, wipe them down regularly and use an antibacterial kitchen spray. Kitchen cloths and sponges can harbour germs, too, so wash them in hot soapy water and replace them often.