

# Stop Foodborne Illness advises: Eat healthy this year—but eat safely, too

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[StopFoodbornellness.org](http://StopFoodbornellness.org)

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, February 5, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The arrival of a new year often includes a renewed commitment to health and fitness. Marketers know these New Year's Resolutions are common so, during the first quarter of the year, you'll see ads and infomercials encouraging you to eat healthfully and be fit. [Stop Foodborne Illness](#), a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens, believes eating with an eye to nutrition and health are great ideas, but only if you eat safely too!

All foods, whether considered healthy or not, have the potential to contain disease-causing pathogens like salmonella and E. coli. In fact, during 2018, many of the foods recalled by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are what many people would consider healthier choices. So, it behooves us to remind you that a food that is healthy is not necessarily safe. [Learn more about foodborne illness.](#)

Whether health and fitness are on your agenda for 2019 or not, be sure to add a new awareness of food safety to your list, and resolve to make food safety an everyday habit.

Is organic food safer?

Many people eat organically produced, sustainably raised, and locally farmed foods because they believe it's the healthier and more conscious choice. Stop Foodborne Illness thinks these kinds of foods can be great! But remember, just as with conventionally produced foods, organic and sustainably raised foods are grown in the ground, raised out in the open, are handled by people, or naturally contain pathogens. Chicken, which naturally contains salmonella, is a good example. It needs to be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F to be safe. Proper cooking



Are raw food diets healthy?



Organic lettuce

kills the salmonella and eliminates the risk.

According to the Mayo Clinic, the term “organic” refers to the way farmers grow and process agricultural products such as fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat. In other words, organic production has more to do with environmental considerations than with food safety. To be considered “organic,” foods must be produced in such a way as to enhance soil and water quality, reduce pollution, and provide safe and healthy environments for livestock which enable them to exhibit natural behaviors.

Certain aspects of organic production are likely to have a positive impact on one’s health. For example, synthetic fertilizers are not permitted nor is using sewage sludge as fertilizer. Also, most synthetic pesticides, and antibiotics, and growth hormones are not allowed.

But other aspects of organic farming may not make the food any safer. For example, organic farming encourages the use of plant waste (green manure), livestock manure or compost. These are potential sources of harmful pathogens when not handled properly.

So how does organic food stack up to conventionally produced food when it comes to food safety?

According to a 2012 Stanford University analysis of various research studies, and published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, there was not a statistically significant difference in the amount of pathogen contamination between organic and conventionally produced food. When it comes to meat products, the study found that both organic and conventionally produced varieties are widely contaminated with harmful pathogens. They found, however, that organic meat products may offer some food safety benefit in that antibiotics are not used in organic meat production so there is a lower risk the meat will contain antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Since any food can contain harmful pathogens, the essential key to food safety is using safe food practices at all stages of the food production cycle—including consumer habits. Food producers are being encouraged to use farming and livestock-raising practices that will reduce the incidence of harmful pathogens in the food consumers buy at the store.

Are raw and vegan diets safer?

In addition to those choosing organic foods, there is a sizeable number of people who have adopted a raw diet. Basically, a raw food diet means eating mostly or completely raw and unprocessed foods. While there are nutritional benefits to eating a raw food-only diet, there are



What you should know about supplements.



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definite risks regarding foodborne illness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), fruits and vegetables are commonly susceptible to contamination from salmonella and other pathogens, with the risk being higher during warm weather months and when these foods are not refrigerated. Salmonella-contaminated foods look and smell normal, so your senses won't help you avoid them.

People on raw diets tend to be primarily vegan, which means they don't consume meat products, eggs or dairy. By eliminating meat, eggs, and dairy – foods which are often implicated in outbreaks – there is a somewhat lessened risk of foodborne illness.

Please don't get the impression that a raw or vegan diet eliminates the risk of foodborne illness. Clearly, the record on food recalls involving uncooked fruits and vegetables—produced organically or not—shows they can be contaminated. So, as far as foodborne illness is concerned, a raw or vegan diet does come with risks. It's common sense: the food is not cooked, so harmful pathogens would not be killed before the food is eaten.

People on a raw diet must consider the risks and benefits of this food lifestyle. In the last year alone there have been many cases of raw food recalls. You can find a list of these here: <https://stopfoodborneillness.org/1-2-2019/>.

What about dietary supplements? Are they safe?

It would seem that health-conscious people are more likely to use dietary supplements. Anyone considering using supplements, should do the research and decide for themselves if the benefits are worth the risk. Our main focus is the safety of dietary supplements.

The primary concerns here are: Source (Who is making the supplements?) and Production Methods (How are they produced?). There's a lot of information for the average person to have to sift through, so anyone considering using dietary supplements might be wise to get the advice of their health care professionals—a physician, pharmacist, acupuncturist, public/community health expert, or naturopath. These are the people most familiar with supplements and can help their clients make the best choice.

Seeking professional advice and doing the homework, learning where a supplement comes from, whether the producer/distributor is reputable, and if there are any associated cases of contamination or illness are crucial, as dietary supplements are not reviewed by the FDA for safety or effectiveness prior to being marketed.

According to this article in [Food Safety News](#), the FDA tends to be hands-off when it comes to supplements, unless a very serious health risk is discovered. So, if an item is marketed as a food supplement rather than food, it is possible that it has a higher safety risk. For example, the FDA noted an increase in the number of beverages that are marketed as supplements. Are these beverages foods or supplements? There is not an easy answer. More on what the FDA says: <https://www.fda.gov/Food/DietarySupplements/UsingDietarySupplements/ucm109760.htm>

Be food safe

Having good nutritional goals is a fabulous way to engage your life any time of year! However, Stop believes the value of awareness and being food safe cannot be overstated. Choose safely. Handle safely. Cook safely. Store safely. When in doubt throw it out.

At home, the best way to avoid foodborne illness is using good food safety practices. Here are some tips:

-- Always start by washing your hands with soap and water. Like this:

<https://stopfoodborneillness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Quick-Facts-Handwashing->

## [Norovirus1.pdf](#)

-- Clean your countertop, cutting boards, and utensils before cutting and chopping produce. Use clean potable cold water to wash your produce. For fruit and vegetables with thick skin, scrub with a vegetable brush to remove dirt and microbes. Produce that needs a gentler touch (leafy greens, berries, broccoli, etc.) can be soaked for a few minutes in clean cold water and dried with a clean paper towel or salad spinner. Even produce to be peeled, like melon or avocado, needs to be washed. Once produce is cut or peeled, refrigerate as soon as possible.

-- Keep your food out of the danger zone (40°F – 140°F). Bacteria grow fastest in the range of 40° – 140°F, the “Danger Zone.” A refrigerator set at 40°F or below will protect most foods. Your fridge is one of the very best weapons you’ve got in the fight against foodborne illness. When bacteria get nutrients, moisture, and warmer temperatures, rapid growth occurs and can reach levels that may cause illness. Refrigeration slows bacterial growth.

-- Cook your food to safe internal temperatures. Just because your food looks done doesn’t mean it is done. The only way to know if your meat, poultry, and egg dishes are safely cooked is to use a food thermometer. For instance, many people assume that when a hamburger is brown in the middle, it’s done. But, according to research by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 1 in 4 hamburgers turns brown before it reaches a safe internal temperature (SIT) of 160°F. The SIT for ground meat and meat mixtures (meatloaf, hamburgers, etc.) is 160°F; for chicken and poultry (including ground, like turkey burgers) it’s 165°F; for fresh, raw, whole cuts of red meat (beef, veal, chops, and lamb) as well as fish and shellfish, it’s 145°F. Not cooking your food to these safe internal temperatures means illness-causing bacteria may still be surviving inside.

-- Reheat your food thoroughly. When reheating leftovers, cook them thoroughly to a minimum SIT of 165°F and use a food thermometer to check every single time! Your food should be steaming hot all the way through. Cover leftovers when reheating on the stove or in the microwave, which helps retain moisture and ensures even cooking. For sauces, stews, soups, and gravies, bring them to a rolling boil. When reheating frozen leftovers, it’s best to first thaw them in the fridge.

-- Don’t let your leftovers linger. One common cause of foodborne illness is not cooling leftovers soon enough. After foods are cooked to safe internal temperatures, bacteria can reappear and reproduce. So, be sure to get those leftovers transferred into shallow containers (for quicker cooling) and into the fridge within two hours of being cooked. And remember that your leftovers in the fridge will last safely for four days max. After that, do one of two things: Freeze them or throw them away.

We hope you meet all your health and fitness goals for 2019!

### Stop Foodborne Illness Is Here to Help You

Stop Foodborne Illness is a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens by promoting sound food safety policy and best practices, building public awareness and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness. For more food safety tips please visit [www.stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/). If you think you have been sickened from food, check this out and contact your local health professional.

For questions and personal assistance, please contact Stop Foodborne Illness’ Community Coordinator, Stanley Rutledge, at [srutledge@stopfoodborneillness.org](mailto:srutledge@stopfoodborneillness.org) or 773-269-6555 x7.

### Social Media:

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