

Department of
Nutrition and Dietetics

Food Safety and You



Why is Food Safety and Hand Hygiene Important?

Food safety is important for you because

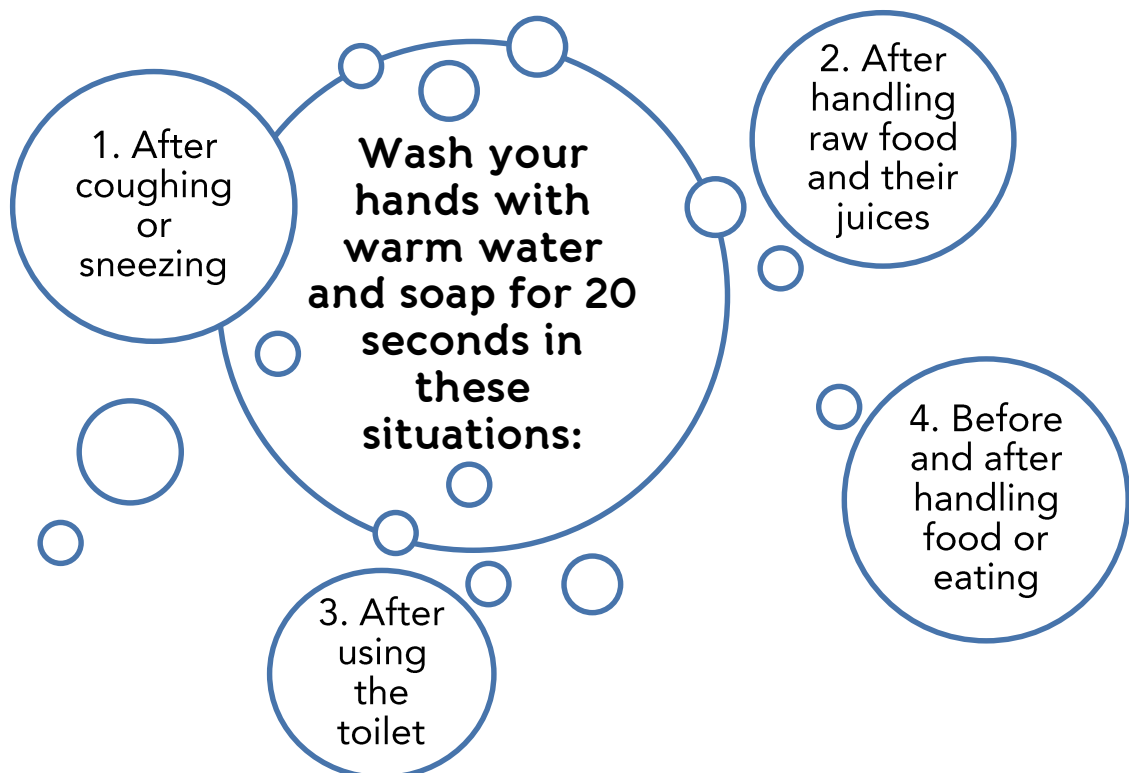
- a weaker immune system makes you more prone/vulnerable to foodborne illnesses (e.g. Salmonella, Campylobacter, Escherichia coli viruses, etc.)
- you have a higher risk of serious consequences that are caused by foodborne illnesses
- you may have extended/longer recovery periods due to foodborne illnesses

Some common symptoms of foodborne illnesses are nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain or cramps, and fever.

Hand Hygiene is important for you because

- washing your hands is a key step to preventing the spread of germs, which causes foodborne illnesses

Here is a guide to when you should wash your hands:



Food Safety at Home

Here are some good food safety practices you can adopt when preparing food at home.

1. Keep your food and tools clean:

- Wash your hands before handling any food
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables before consuming them
- Use hot and soapy water to wash utensils, cutting boards and countertops
- Sanitise all sponges (microwave wet sponge for one minute) and replace them frequently

2. Separate your food and tools:

- Use separate chopping boards (marble or plastic instead of wood) for raw and cooked foods, and wash them after each food preparation
- Store raw meat on lower shelves in the fridge, away from ready-to-eat foods

3. Cook your food thoroughly:

- Ensure that all meat, poultry, fish and eggs are cooked thoroughly (food is ready to eat when it is above 75°C or when the juices run clear)
- Consume cooked foods that are left at room temperature within two hours
- Avoid eating leftovers if possible, otherwise ensure that it is thoroughly reheated before consuming (at least 75°C)

4. Chill or thaw your food properly:

- Refrigerate or freeze all meat products within one hour of purchase or cooking
- Store your food in small portions and in airtight containers
- Keep your refrigerator at 4°C or lower
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave; never thaw food by leaving it on the countertop at room temperature
- If food is thawed in cold water or in the microwave, ensure that it is cooked immediately after
- Avoid re-freezing defrosted foods

Food Storage for Food Safety

Here are some recommendations on how long you should store food in the refrigerator.

Food	Fridge	Freezer
Eggs in shell, pasteurised*	3 to 5 weeks	-
Hardboiled eggs (peeled/unpeeled)	1 week	-
Poultry (e.g. chicken, duck)	1 to 2 days	1 year
Fish, prawns, mussels and oysters	1 to 2 days	2 to 6 months
Ground meat and sausages	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Pork, beef, lamb and cooked ham	3 to 5 days	4 to 12 months
Leftovers	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months

*Pasteurisation: a process where food products undergo heat treatment to kill disease-causing germs, making it safe for consumption.

Sources:

<https://www.fda.gov/media/74435/download>

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/cold-food-storage-charts>




<https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-information/food-safety-education/good-food-safety-practices>

Food Storage for Food Safety

Here are some recommendations on how you should store food in the refrigerator.

Store uncooked foods on lower shelves to prevent drippings from contaminating other foods below it.

Food Storage Chart

	<p><u>Ready-to-eat foods</u> Snacks, leftovers, dairy products, drinks, jam and mayonnaise</p>	Stored at the top shelves
	<p><u>Fruits and vegetables</u> Store ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables in sealed bags or containers, and always wash them before consuming</p>	Stored in the middle shelves
	<p><u>Raw meat, poultry and fish</u> Always store these foods in covered and air-tight containers</p>	Stored in the bottom shelves

Food Safety Outside

When shopping, you should

- avoid deli meats (e.g. ham and salami), unpasteurised milk, dented food cans and cracked eggs
- check the expiration date of the product before purchasing it
- keep raw meat, poultry or seafood and their juices away from other foods
- check for visible signs of spoilage (e.g. mould/fungus and signs of rotting)

When eating out, you should

- choose food stores with good hygiene standards
- choose foods that are freshly prepared and served hot, and avoid lukewarm foods or buffets
- avoid raw or partially cooked foods (e.g. sashimi, half-boiled eggs and meat that is not properly cooked)
- avoid salads (e.g. rojak), especially those with beansprouts and alfalfa
- have chilled drinks instead of adding ice
- use sauces from sachets instead of bottles
- use separate utensils for cooked and raw foods, and avoid drinking the soup while there is raw food cooking at self-cook restaurants (e.g. hot pot and Korean BBQ restaurants)

Clinic B2
TTSH Medical Centre, Level B2
Contact:
6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



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