



**Dear EAT RIGHT MONTANA Friend:**

Mid-summer greetings! This is the seventh in **EAT RIGHT MONTANA's Real Guidelines for Real People** series. It focuses on the first ever US Dietary Guideline to address food safety concerns: **Keep food safe to eat.**

July is definitely the right time to talk about keeping food safe to eat. According to USDA, foodborne illness increases during the summer for two reasons: (1) Bacteria multiply more rapidly during summer's ideal "growing" season – hot and humid in much of the US; and (2) Summertime fun – BBQs, picnics, ballgames and camping trips – means more outdoor meals where it can be harder to fight bacteria by **cleaning, separating, cooking & chilling.**

When it comes to food safety in the US, several things are clear:

- \* **Although Americans enjoy the safest food supply on the planet, there's plenty of room for improvement.** USDA estimates the human cost of foodborne illness in the US at \$ 6.9 billion per year. CDC monitors and reports on foodborne pathogens thru FoodNet @ [www.cdc.gov/foodnet/](http://www.cdc.gov/foodnet/)

- \* **Americans worry about rare (BSE or Mad Cow Disease) and distant (FMD or Foot and Mouth Disease) problems, while failing to take simple, effective precautions at home.** The most common mistake in US homes is poor hand washing. See survey @ [www.audits.com/2000HFS.html](http://www.audits.com/2000HFS.html)

- \* **Understanding consumer perceptions about risk is critical to changing food behaviors.** The Economic Research Service reports on this complex and challenging issue @ [www.ers.usda.gov/Emphases/SafeFood/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/Emphases/SafeFood/)

- \* **There's a vast array of creative food safety education materials for consumers of all ages.** Check your options @ [www.fightbac.org/](http://www.fightbac.org/) and @ <http://foodsafe.ucdavis.edu/music.html> (for food safety songs).

As always, we welcome your suggestions and comments.

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# Food Safety Facts

**Improvement in home food safety practices appears to be on the decline according to the 2000 Home Food Safety Study by Audits International.**

Audits, the leader in food safety risk assessment, reports that nearly three-quarters of households made significant mistakes in food handling. They suggest that half of foodborne illness in the US results from problems at home. For more info @ [www.audits.com/2000HFS.html](http://www.audits.com/2000HFS.html)

**Americans also need a "refrigerator refresher," according to a 2001 survey by the American Dietetic Association and Con Agra Foundation.**

Sixty percent do not know that their refrigerator should be set below 40 degrees to ensure food safety. See more @ [www.homefoodsafety.org/](http://www.homefoodsafety.org/)

**USDA and land-grant university researchers are using food science and technology to help fight the threat of foodborne illness in the US.**

The estimated medical costs and productivity losses from pathogens in food are between \$6.5 and \$34.9 billion annually. Up to 33 million Americans are stricken by foodborne illness each year. Some 9,000 die as a result. More @ [www.reeusda.gov/success/impact00/foodtech.htm](http://www.reeusda.gov/success/impact00/foodtech.htm)

**You can't judge the doneness of food by looking at its color.**

Color can be misleading. USDA research shows that one out of every four hamburgers turns brown in the middle before it is safely cooked and ready to eat. Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees F. Find all the details about the proper use of food thermometers and safe cooking @ [www.fsis.usda.gov/Thermy](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Thermy)

**Using thermometers is the only way to tell if food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy risky bacteria. A food thermometer is the best way to measure whether food is fully cooked and safe to eat.**

Surveys show that less than half of consumers own a food thermometer and only 3 percent use one when cooking hamburgers at home. USDA has created "*Thermy*<sup>™</sup>," a cartoon character, to educate cooks on food safety and encourage the use of food thermometers at home. More on food safety @ [www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/news/2001/memorialday.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/news/2001/memorialday.htm)

**Provided by Eat Right Montana**



**Real Guidelines for Real People: Hot tips for safe summer food**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**                      **CONTACT: Crystelle Fogle, MBA, RD**  
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**Healthy Families 2001: Keeping food safe to eat (7<sup>th</sup> in a series of 12)**

All across Montana, families are enjoying outdoor summer meals - picnics, BBQs, and backyard get togethers. Unfortunately, some invisible, and dangerous, little critters are joining in their fun.

“Warm summer temperatures and outdoor food events combine to create the perfect breeding ground for the bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses,” says Lynn Paul, PhD, RD, registered dietitian with the MSU Extension Service in Bozeman. “Fortunately, there are quick, easy ways to ***Fight Bac***<sup>™</sup> and keep your family's food safe - wherever you are eating this summer.”

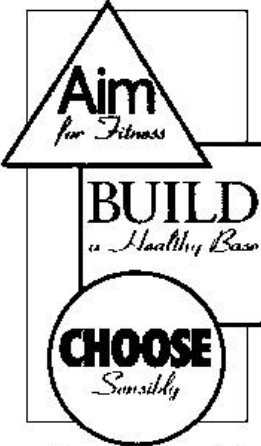
The problem, according to a survey recently released by Audits International, is that nearly three-quarters of Americans do not follow recommended food safety practices in their own homes. The most common mistake is failing to wash hands properly before handling food. Consumers do an even poorer job with food safety when they are away from kitchen facilities, like running water and refrigeration.

Dr. Paul says the solution is simple. "Montana's home cooks need to practice the same techniques that we teach to commercial foodservice workers," she advises. "The four essential steps to keeping food safe to eat in any situation are always the same: **Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.**"

Eat Right Montana, a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges all Montanans to join the restaurant industry and school food programs on the food safety bandwagon. Using the "Serv-Safe" program, MSU Extension agents, county sanitarians, food distributors, and the Montana Beef Council are training foodservice workers in proper food handling techniques.

"The good news is that foodborne illness is a preventable problem," notes Paul. Food safety truly is "in your hands" - and you can start right now. The first step to keeping food safe is to wash your hands thoroughly and carefully every time that you handle food.

**ATTACHED: “Keeping Food Safe to Eat” and “How Smart Parents Fight BAC”**



...for good health

## Real Guidelines for Real People: Four Steps to *Fight Bac!*<sup>TM</sup>

The power to prevent foodborne illness is in your hands. How you wash your hands, and how you handle food in your home, can determine whether or not your family will get a foodborne illness.

Foodborne illnesses come from eating food that is contaminated with an invisible enemy: bacteria. Sometimes called food poisoning, these illnesses are often confused with the 24-hour flu.

For most healthy people, a bout of foodborne illnesses is neither long lasting nor life threatening. It feels like the flu and lasts just a day or two. However, the consequences can be severe, and even fatal, for young children, older people and those who have a weakened immune system.

Mishandling food at home is a leading cause of foodborne illness. The good news is that you can protect your family with four simple steps: **clean, separate, cook and chill**.

## Keeping your family's food safe to eat.

### 1. Take steps every day to *Fight Bac!*<sup>TM</sup>

- ✓ Keeping food safe to eat is something that everyone needs to do every day. To insure the safety of your family's food supply, follow the four simple *Fight Bac!*<sup>TM</sup> steps: **Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill**.

### 2. **CLEAN: Wash hands thoroughly.**

- ✓ Wash your hands with hot soapy water before handling food - and after using the bathroom, handling pets, or changing diapers. When you are away from soap and water, use disinfectant wipes or gel regularly.

### 3. **CLEAN: Wash all utensils & cooking surfaces.**

- ✓ Wash dishes, utensils and cutting boards (use non-porous types) with hot soapy water after preparing each food. When cooking and eating outside, use plastic or paper products and throw away after the meal.

### 4. **SEPARATE: Don't cross-contaminate raw foods.**

- ✓ Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from all other foods in your shopping cart and in your refrigerator. When putting food into a cooler, wrap meats securely and keep them separate from the other foods.

### 5. **SEPARATE: Don't cross-contaminate in cooking.**

- ✓ While cooking, use one cutting board for raw meat products and another for produce and ready-to-eat foods. After grilling, never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw foods, like meat, poultry or fish.

**6. COOK: Prepare all foods at proper temperatures.**

- ✓ Foods must be cooked long enough and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. For example, fish must be cooked until it is nontransparent and flakes easily with a fork.

**7. COOK: Use a food thermometer to check temps.**

- ✓ Use a food thermometer, not color, to judge whether food has reached a proper internal temperature. Grill steaks and roasts to 145 degrees F, ground beef to 160 degrees F, and chicken breasts to 170 degrees F.

**8. CHILL: Refrigerate raw foods & leftovers promptly.**

- ✓ Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Keep coolers as cold as possible by replenishing ice blocks and gel packs frequently. Always keep coolers in the shade.

**9. CHILL: Defrost & marinate all foods in the fridge.**

- ✓ Never defrost foods at room temperature or marinate meats on counter tops. Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Marinate meat in the fridge in leak-proof plastic bags.

**10. Take steps to *Fight Bac!*<sup>TM</sup> everywhere you eat.**

- ✓ In the house, on the deck, in the backyard, on the road, in the RV, on the trail, or around the campfire, follow the four steps to keeping food safe. With a just little care, you can keep bacteria from spoiling your meals.

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For tips on easy ways to fight foodborne illness, click on:

- *Fight BAC!*<sup>TM</sup>  
<http://www.fightbac.org/>
- Home Food Safety: It's in Your Hands<sup>TM</sup>  
<http://www.homefoodsafety.org/>
- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information  
<http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

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**Celebrating  
Healthy Families  
2001**



# How Smart Parents Can FIGHT BAC!

Food safety is important every day of the year – and it's especially critical during warm weather. Keeping food safe means that you won't have to worry about your family or friends getting a foodborne illness. The good news is that it's easy to **FIGHT BAC** – fight bacteria – at home. Even young children can learn to help you **FIGHT BAC** and keep food safe. For more information, check out all the details at: [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org)

## **CLEAN: Wash hands and cooking surfaces carefully.**

- This is one of the best and easiest ways to get kids involved in food safety.
- The key is to make regular, thorough hand washing a habit for everyone.
- Be a role model by washing your hands thoroughly with hot, soapy water.
- Wash before touching food, and after using the bathroom or diapering babies.
- Make washing fun with kid-friendly soap and brightly colored towels.
- Wash thoroughly by singing happy birthday twice during each washing.

## **SEPARATE: Keep raw and cooked food separate.**

- Cross-contamination spreads harmful bacteria from one food to another.
- Teach your kids to keep meat, poultry and fish separate from other foods.
- Wrap raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic, and separate in shopping cart.
- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.
- Use separate utensils, dishes and cutting boards for raw meat, poultry and fish.
- Wash any item that touches raw meats before using it with other foods.

## **COOK: Always cook all food to proper temperatures.**

- Cooking food thoroughly is necessary to kill bacteria that can cause illness.
- Talk to kids about why it is important to cook food to the right temperature.
- Show kids how you carefully check the temperature of cooking foods.
- Use a meat thermometer to measure the internal temps of all meat and poultry.
- Cook ground meat to an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees.
- Ask that restaurant hamburgers be cooked "well done."

## **CHILL: Refrigerate food promptly after cooking.**

- Cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying.
- Keep refrigerator at 40 degrees and freezer at 0 degrees.
- Make sure there is plenty of room for air to circulate in the refrigerator.
- Show kids how you use a thermometer to check fridge and freezer temps.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers and other foods within two hours of cooking.
- Defrost frozen food in fridge or microwave – NEVER on the counter.



**Celebrating  
Healthy  
Families 2001**

# Healthy Families 2001:

## Real Guidelines for Real People

**January 2001**

- **The New Dietary Guidelines: What's in them for you?**

**February 2001**

- **Aim for a Healthy Weight: Getting real about weight management**

**March 2001**

- **Be Physically Active Each Day: Spring into fun and fitness**

**April 2001**

- **Let the Pyramid Guide Your Food Choices: Build a tasty eating style**

**May 2001**

- **Choose a Variety of Grains: Great grains for life**

**June 2001**

- **Choose a Variety of Fruits and Vegetables: 5 A Day and beyond**

**July 2001**

- **Keep Food Safe to Eat: Putting safety first**

**August 2001**

- **Making Sensible Fat Choices: Straight facts on fat**

**September 2001**

- **Making Sensible Sugar Choices: Straight scoop on sugar**

**October 2001**

- **Making Sensible Sodium Choices: Straight shake on salt**

**November 2001**

- **Making Sensible Beverage Choices: A toast to your health**

**December 2001**

- **Year-Round Health: Real guidelines for real health**

