

Safe Handling of Raw Produce and Fresh-Squeezed Fruit and Vegetable Juices

Video Transcript

This message is brought to you by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Fruits and vegetables — so fresh, so colorful, so delicious and healthy.

We can all be healthier and improve our diets by eating more fruits and vegetables. As with any food product, you have to be careful how you handle and prepare what you eat. It's as easy as washing your hands before touching fresh fruits and vegetables.

Growers and processors are responsible for preventing bacteria in the soil or water from contaminating fresh fruits and vegetables where they are grown or processed.

With fresh-cut produce, like bagged salads or cut fruit, make sure it's refrigerated or surrounded by ice. And, don't buy bruised or damaged fruit. It's a great place for bacteria to hide and spread rapidly to the rest of the fruit.

While shopping and when checking out, keep your fresh fruits and vegetables separate from meat, poultry, and seafood...and make sure you're in the right line.

At home, store fruits and vegetables that require refrigeration immediately in the refrigerator — especially anything that's pre-cut or peeled. Use a thermometer to ensure that food in your refrigerator stays at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

We all know that we need to wash our hands after handling raw meat, and we should also wash our hands after handling produce too.

Cut away damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing or eating.

And make sure you wash the produce before you eat it — even if you plan to peel it. If it's something firm like a melon or cucumber, use a produce brush. There's no need to use soap or any kind of produce wash. Plain running water is fine.

For pre-cut, bagged items, look on the package — if they're labeled "pre-washed" and "ready to eat," then there is no need for additional washing.

If you're eating fruits and vegetables raw, keep them separate from foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood — and the utensils used to prepare them. This will help avoid cross contamination.

Use separate cutting boards for meats and produce as well as for raw and cooked foods. And finally, wash cutting boards, utensils and counter tops with hot water and soap between the time you prepare raw meats, seafood, and poultry and any produce that will be not be cooked.

For plastic and other non-porous cutting boards, just run them through the dishwasher when you're done.



Nothing like a glass of orange juice to get your day started.

Most of the juices sold in the U.S. are pasteurized or otherwise treated to kill harmful bacteria. But, if you enjoy buying fresh-squeezed juice, like I do, you should know that untreated fruit and vegetable juices may contain harmful bacteria.

Some stores, cider mills or markets sell packages or containers of fresh-squeezed juice that have not been pasteurized or treated to kill harmful bacteria.

If you're at risk for foodborne illness like the young, the elderly, or people with weakened immune systems, it's advisable to look for a warning label on the package.

Juices that are fresh-squeezed and sold by the glass may not be pasteurized or treated and do not require a warning label.

While normally safe, if you are at risk for foodborne illness, you should not drink unprocessed juices.

Keeping these common sense tips in mind will not only improve your diet but also help keep you and your family safe from any foodborne illness possibly associated with fresh fruits, vegetables, and juices.

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