



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources

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HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY: SENIORS, PREGNANT WOMEN, SMALL CHILDREN, IMMUNE COMPROMISED

The holiday season is just around the corner and many of us will be entertaining friends and family members. Nutritionists recommend that we plan our holiday get-togethers to include a variety of healthy food choices. But as we plan, we need to consider that certain foods may pose a significant health hazard for certain vulnerable populations because of bacteria present in the product's raw or uncooked state. The Food and Drug Administration recommends seniors, pregnant women, small children, and immune-compromised individuals avoid these products:

- ▶ Raw fin fish and shellfish, including oysters, clams, mussels, and scallops
- ▶ Raw or unpasteurized milk or cheese
- ▶ Soft cheeses, if made with unpasteurized milk, such as feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined, and Mexican-style cheese
- ▶ Hard cheeses; semi-soft cheeses such as mozzarella; pasteurized processed cheeses such as slices and spreads; cream cheese; yogurt; and cottage cheese need not be avoided
- ▶ Refrigerated pates or meat spreads. Canned or shelf-stable pates and meat spreads may be eaten
- ▶ Salad dressings, cookie or cake batters, sauces, mousse, some custards, homemade ice cream, homemade mayonnaise, and beverages such as egg nog made with raw or lightly cooked egg or egg products
- ▶ Raw meat or poultry

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- ▶ Raw hot dogs
- ▶ Raw or lightly cooked alfalfa and mung bean sprouts
- ▶ Unpasteurized or untreated fruit or vegetable juice. Most juice in the United States is pasteurized or otherwise treated to kill harmful bacteria. To help consumers identify unpasteurized or untreated juices, the Food and Drug Administration is requiring a warning label on these products. The label says: **WARNING:** This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems.
- ▶ Refrigerated smoked seafood, unless it is contained in a cooked dish, such as a casserole. Refrigerated smoked seafood, such as salmon, trout, whitefish, cod, tuna, or mackerel, is most often labeled as "nova-style," "lox," "kippered," "smoked," or "jerky." The fish is found in the refrigerator section or sold at deli counters of grocery stores and delicatessens. Canned or shelf-stable smoked seafood may be eaten.

All consumers can reduce the risk of foodborne illness by following these four simple steps:

1. Clean: Wash hands and surfaces often
2. Separate: Don't cross-contaminate
3. Cook: Cook to proper temperatures
4. Chill: Refrigerate promptly (refrigerator temperature should be at 40^o F. or below).

For more information on handling foods safely call toll-free 1 (888) SAFEFOOD, U. S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, Food Information Line--24 hours a day. Or Visit FDA's Food Safety Website www.cfsan.fda.gov.

Source: United States Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, May 1999. Website: <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/~mow/foodborn.html>

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