

Safe Food and Water



Adapted from materials provided by the
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention




WHY SHOULD I BE CAREFUL ABOUT FOOD AND WATER?

Food and water can carry germs that cause illness. Germs in food or water may cause serious infections in people with HIV. You can protect yourself from many infections by preparing food and drinks properly.

WHAT ILLNESSES CAUSED BY GERMS IN FOOD AND WATER DO PEOPLE WITH HIV COMMONLY GET?

Germs in food and water that can make someone with HIV ill include *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Listeria*, and *Cryptosporidium*. They can cause diarrhea, upset stomach, vomiting, stomach cramps, fever, headache, muscle pain, bloodstream infection, meningitis, or encephalitis.

ARE THESE ILLNESSES THE SAME IN PEOPLE WITH HIV AS IN OTHER PEOPLE?



No. The diarrhea and nausea are often much worse and more difficult to treat in people with HIV. These illnesses are also more likely to cause serious problems in people with HIV, such as bloodstream infections and meningitis. People with HIV also have a harder time recovering fully from these illnesses.

IF I HAVE HIV, CAN I EAT MEAT, POULTRY, AND FISH?

Yes. Meat, poultry (such as chicken or turkey), and fish can make you sick only if they are raw, undercooked, or spoiled.

To avoid illness:

- Cook all meat and poultry until they are no longer pink in the middle. If you use a meat thermometer, the temperature inside the meat or poultry should be over 165°F. Fish should be cooked until it is flaky, not rubbery.
- After handling raw meat, poultry, and fish, wash your hands well with soap and water before you touch any other food.
- Thoroughly wash cutting boards, cooking utensils, and countertops with soap and hot water after they have had contact with raw meat, poultry, or fish.
- Do not let uncooked meat, poultry, or fish or their juices touch other food or each other.
- Do not let meat, poultry, or fish sit at room temperature for more than a few minutes. Keep them in the refrigerator until you are ready to cook them.
- Eat or drink only pasteurized milk or dairy products.





CAN I EAT EGGS IF I HAVE HIV?

Yes. Eggs are safe to eat if they are well cooked. Cook eggs until the yolk and white are solid, not runny. Do not eat foods that may contain raw eggs, such as hollandaise sauce, cookie dough, homemade mayonnaise, and Caesar salad dressing. If you prepare these foods at home, use pasteurized eggs instead of eggs in the shell. You can find pasteurized eggs in the dairy case at your supermarket.

CAN I EAT RAW FRUITS AND VEGETABLES?

Yes. Raw fruits and vegetables are safe to eat if you wash them carefully first. Wash, then peel fruit that you will eat raw. Eating raw alfalfa sprouts and tomatoes can cause illness, but washing them well can reduce your risk of illness.



HOW CAN I MAKE MY WATER SAFE?

Because you cannot be sure if your tap water is safe, you may wish to avoid tap water, including water or ice from a refrigerator ice-maker, which is made with tap water. Always check with the local health department and water utility to see if they have issued any special notices for people with HIV about tap water.

You may also wish to boil or filter your water, or drink bottled water. Processed carbonated (bubbly)

drinks in cans or bottles should be safe, but drinks made at a fountain might not be because they are made with tap water. If you choose to boil or filter your water or to drink only bottled water, do this all the time, not just at home.

Boiling is the best way to kill germs in your water. Heat your water at a rolling boil for 1 minute. After the boiled water cools, put it in a clean bottle or pitcher with a lid and store it in the refrigerator. Use the water for drinking, cooking, or making ice. Water bottles and ice trays should be cleaned with soap and water before use. Don't touch the inside of them after cleaning. If you can, clean your water bottles and ice trays yourself.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN SHOPPING FOR FOOD?

Read food labels carefully. Be sure that all dairy products that you purchase have been pasteurized. Do not buy any food that contains raw or under-cooked meat or eggs if it is meant to be eaten raw. Be sure that the "sell by" date has not passed.

Put packaged meat, poultry, or fish in separate plastic bags to prevent their juices from dripping onto other groceries or each other.

Check the package that the food comes in to make sure that it isn't damaged.

Do not buy food that has been displayed in unsafe or unclean conditions. Examples include meat allowed to sit without refrigeration or cooked shrimp displayed with raw shrimp.



After shopping, put all cold and frozen foods into your refrigerator or freezer as soon as you can. Do not leave food sitting in the car. Keeping cold or frozen food out of refrigeration for even a couple of hours can give germs a chance to grow.

IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO EAT IN RESTAURANTS?

Yes. Like grocery stores, restaurants follow guidelines for cleanliness and good hygiene set by the health department. However, you should follow these general rules in restaurants:

- **Order all food well done.** If meat is served pink or bloody, send it back to the kitchen for more cooking. Fish should be flaky, not rubbery, when you cut it.
- **Order fried eggs cooked on both sides.** Avoid eggs that are “sunny-side up.” Scrambled eggs should be cooked until they are not runny. Do not order foods that may contain raw eggs, such as Caesar salad or hollandaise sauce. If you aren’t sure about the ingredients in a dish, ask your waiter before you order.
- **Do not order any raw or lightly steamed fish or shellfish** (eg, oysters, clams, mussels, sushi, or sashimi). All fish should be cooked until done.





SHOULD I TAKE SPECIAL MEASURES WITH FOOD AND WATER IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

Yes. Not all countries have high standards of food hygiene. You need to take special care outside of the United States, particularly in developing countries. Follow these rules when in other countries:

- Do not eat uncooked fruits and vegetables unless you can peel them. Avoid salads.
- Eat cooked foods while they are still hot.
- Boil all water before drinking it. Use only ice made from boiled water. Drink only canned or bottled drinks or beverages made with boiled water.
- Steaming-hot foods, fruits you peel yourself, bottled and canned processed drinks, and hot coffee or tea should be safe.
- Talk with your health care provider about other advice on travel abroad.

Free referrals and information:

CDC-INFO

1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

TTY: 1-888-232-6348

In English, en Español

24 Hours/Day

Free materials:

CDC National Prevention Information Network

(800) 458-5231

1-301-562-1098 (International)

P.O. Box 6003

Rockville, MD 20849-6003

<http://www.cdcnpin.org>

Free HIV/AIDS treatment information:

AIDSinfo: (800) 448-0440

<http://www.aidsinfo.nih.gov>

Project Inform: (800) 822-7422

<http://www.projectinform.org>