



Washing Hands, Food and Kitchen Surfaces

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Washing is the primary way to reduce your risk of foodborne illness. Whether it is your hands or kitchen counter, it is important to wash properly to stop the spread of harmful pathogens. The rules for washing food are not as clear cut.

Read on to find out the proper way to wash and when washing is not necessary. In fact, there are times when washing is unsafe.

Foods that Should Always Be Washed

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Wash all produce, no matter where it comes from, with cool tap water before eating. This applies to organic produce as well. Do not use soap as the porous surfaces can absorb the ingredients in soap.

Don't skip fruits and vegetables with inedible peels—bananas, avocados, grapefruit, lemons, limes, and squash. Dirt and bacteria can be transferred from the peel to the inside of the fruit as you cut or peel it.

Pay special attention to leafy greens. Cut away any damaged areas on leaves or stems before preparing or eating the greens.

If something seems rotten,



discard it.

- If leafy greens are not labeled as "pre-washed" or "ready-to-eat," thoroughly wash them under running water *just before* chopping, cooking or eating. This will help reduce the presence of microorganisms. Do not wash leafy greens before storing, you can potentially promote bacterial growth and enhance spoilage.

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Washing Greens (continued)

- If lettuce has a core, such as iceberg lettuce, remove it before washing.
- When you have loose leaves, such as mesclun, that can't easily be held under cold running water, immerse the leaves in a large clean bowl or a salad spinner filled with cold water. Toss them around in the water for 30 seconds or more. Drain and repeat twice.
- Never wash leafy greens with soap, detergent or bleach, since these can leave residues that are not meant to be consumed. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration doesn't recommend using commercial produce washes because these may also leave residues.
- If leafy greens are labeled as "pre-washed" or "ready-to-eat," they can be used safely without additional washing.
- After washing fresh greens, pat them dry with paper towels or a clean kitchen towel — or use a salad spinner — to help remove excess liquid.

Never Wash

Raw Chicken (and other raw meat): Despite what many think, washing raw chicken does not clean your chicken. There is a chance that raw chicken will have *Salmonella* or *Campylobacter* on it and the only way to kill those pathogens is to cook chicken to an internal temperature of 165°F. Rinsing raw chicken can spread those harmful pathogens around your kitchen and make you sick.

Fish: Avoid washing raw fish because it doesn't clean the fish. Instead, it increases the chance of cross-contamination to other foods, utensils, and surfaces.

Eggs: Avoid washing eggs after purchase because it can remove the coating that protects eggs from bacteria that is applied during processing.

Keeping Your Work Area Clean

Illness-causing bacteria can survive and spread around your kitchen, so it is important to wash the right way to prevent these bacteria from spreading to your food.

- **Wash hands** for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water.
- **Wash surfaces, cutting boards, dishes, and**



cooking utensils with hot soapy water after each use to prevent bacteria from spreading throughout the kitchen.

- **Sanitize sponges** and replace frequently.
- **Always wash** can lids before opening them so harmful particles don't fall into food.