



Fresh Produce Safety

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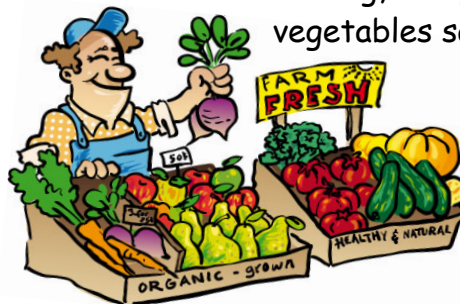
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We all know it's important to include fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet. MyPlate reminds us that half our plate should be made up of these foods. Spring and summer are the perfect time to enjoy a variety of fresh, flavorful, locally grown fruits and vegetables.



Did you know that harmful bacteria may be in the soil or water where produce grows and can contaminate them? Fresh produce can also become contaminated after it is harvested.

Read on for tips on buying, storing, and preparing fruits and vegetables safely.

Buying Tips

Making wise buying decisions at the grocery store and farmers' market can help keep you safe.

- ◆ Choose produce that is not bruised or damaged.
- ◆ When buying pre-cut, bagged or packaged produce such as half of a watermelon or bagged salad greens, choose only those items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- ◆ Bag fresh fruits and vegetables separately from raw meat, poultry, and seafood when packing them to take home from the market.



Storing and Separating Tips

It is important to store fresh produce properly to ensure quality and safety.

- ◆ Store perishable fresh vegetables and fruits in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40° F or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer to check. Ask the produce manager, if you are not sure whether an item should be refrigerated to keep its quality.
- ◆ Refrigerate all produce that is purchased pre-cut or packaged.



Keep vegetables and fruits that will be eaten raw separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood.

- ◆ Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with soap and hot water after preparing raw meat, poultry, and seafood and before preparing produce.
- ◆ If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- ◆ If you use plastic other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use.

Preparation Tips

- ◆ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after preparing any fresh produce.
- ◆ Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Throw away any produce that looks rotten.
- ◆ Wash all produce thoroughly under running water before preparing and/or eating, including produce grown at home or bought from a grocery store or farmers' market. Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended.
- ◆ Even if you do not plan to eat the skin, it is still important to wash produce first so dirt and bacteria are not transferred from the surface when peeling or cutting produce.
- ◆ Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- ◆ After washing, dry produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to further reduce bacteria that may be present on the surface.

Prewashed Produce

Read the label on pre-cut, bagged or packaged produce. Many of these items are pre-washed and ready-to-eat. If it says prewashed on the packaging, use the produce without further washing.

If you wash produce marked as "pre-washed" or "ready-to-eat," you risk the food coming in contact with unclean surfaces or utensils. Using the produce directly from the package will help you to avoid cross contamination.