

AVOID CROSS-CONTAMINATION

One of the most common causes of foodborne illness is cross-contamination: the transfer of bacteria from food to food, hand to food, or equipment to food.



Food to Food: Raw, contaminated ingredients may be added to foods, or fluids from raw foods may drip into foods that receive no further cooking. A common mistake is to leave thawing meat on a top shelf in the refrigerator where it can drip down onto prepared foods stored below.



Hand to Food: Bacteria are found throughout the body – in the hair, on the skin, in clothing, in the mouth, nose, and throat, in the intestinal tract, and on scabs from skin wounds. These bacteria often end up on the hands where they can easily spread to food. People can also pick up bacteria by touching raw food, then transfer it to cooked or ready-to-eat food.



Equipment to Food: Bacteria may pass from equipment to food when equipment that has touched contaminated food is then used to prepare other food without proper cleaning and sanitizing. For example, cross-contamination can occur when surfaces used for cutting raw poultry are then used to cut foods that will be eaten raw, such as fresh vegetables.



Coverings such as plastic wrap and holding and serving containers can also harbor bacterial that can spread to food. A can opener or food slicer can also become a source of cross-contamination if not properly sanitized between use.

Airborne: splash from the use of pressurized water, high pressure air cleaning, dust/dirt from unscreened doors or windows and from flying insects.

