

Food Safety and Eating Out

What You Need to Know

- If you think you or someone you know got sick from food, [report it to your local health department](#) even if you don't know what food made you sick. Reporting an illness can help public health officials identify a foodborne disease outbreak and keep others from getting sick.



Going out to eat? Choose a restaurant that keeps food safety on the menu. Here are some tips to protect yourself from food poisoning while eating out.

Tips to Avoid Food Poisoning While Eating Out

- **Check inspection scores.** Check a restaurant's score at your [health department's website](#), ask the health department for a copy of the report, or look for it when you get to the restaurant.
- **Look for certificates that show kitchen managers have completed food safety training.** Proper food safety training can help improve practices that reduce the chance of spreading foodborne germs and illnesses.
- **Look for safe food-handling practices.** [Sick food workers](#)  [\[PDF - 2 pages\]](#) can spread their illness to customers. If you can see food being prepared, check to make sure workers are using gloves or utensils to handle foods that will not be cooked further, such as deli meats and salad greens.
- **Order food that's properly cooked.** [Certain foods](#), including meat, poultry, and fish, need to be cooked to a temperature high enough to kill harmful germs that may be present. If a restaurant serves you undercooked meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs, send it back to be cooked until it is safe to eat.
- **Avoid lukewarm food.** Cold food should be served cold, and hot food should be served hot. If you're selecting food from a buffet or salad bar, make sure the hot food is steaming and the cold food is chilled. Germs that cause food poisoning grow quickly when food is in the danger zone, between 40°F and 140°F.
- **Ask your server** if they use pasteurized eggs in foods such as Caesar salad dressing, custards, tiramisu, and hollandaise sauce. Raw or undercooked eggs can make you sick unless they're pasteurized to kill germs.
- **Take care of your leftovers quickly.** Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of eating out. If it is above 90°F outside, refrigerate leftovers within 1 hour. Eat leftovers within 3 to 4 days. Throw them out after that time.

More Information

- [FoodSafety.gov](#) 
- [How to Report a Foodborne Illness](#)
- [You Can Help Solve Foodborne Outbreaks](#)
- [Restaurant Food Safety Findings in Plain Language](#)
- [How Restaurants Address Food Allergies](#)
- [Dining Out With Food Allergies](#) 
- [COVID-19: Visiting a Restaurant or Bar](#)
- [COVID-19: Considerations for Restaurant and Bar Operators](#)
- [COVID-19: When You've Been Fully Vaccinated](#)

Food Safety Features



Read other food safety features to learn more about protecting yourself and your loved ones from food poisoning.

Features

COVID-19: When You've Been Fully Vaccinated

- [Fact Sheet: Protect Yourself When Eating Out](#)  [PDF – 1 page]