



Grocery Store Food Safety

Keep these tips in mind when you shop

Contaminated and mishandled foods are linked with food-borne illness outbreaks. The following recommendations help keep food safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies from the grocery store to the kitchen.

DO THESE THINGS:

- Place packaged meat, poultry and fish into separate plastic bags before placing in your shopping cart. Bacteria on the meat can spread to other foods in your cart.
- Check the dates. Milk and milk products carry “sell by” dates. The store must sell the product by this date. For the freshest product, choose the one with the most distant “sell by” date.
- Select only pasteurized fruit juices. Check the label to be sure the product is pasteurized. Frozen, concentrated and canned juices have been heat-treated and are safe to drink, but may not be labeled. Fresh squeezed juices are not pasteurized and may contain harmful bacteria.
- Check eggs before purchase. Avoid buying cracked or damaged eggs.
- Always check labels for food safety information.
- Check for damaged packaging — don’t buy dented cans, leaking cartons or bottles, ripped boxes or packets and packages with broken or pierced seals.
- Choose only pasteurized (heat-treated) milk, cheese and yogurt. Unpasteurized or “raw” products may contain harmful bacteria. The food label will tell you if a product is pasteurized.
- Make the grocery store your last stop on your list of errands. Perishable foods, such as dairy foods, meat and poultry, should not be out of refrigeration for more than two hours (one hour if the temperature is above 90 F).

AVOID THESE THINGS

- Do not buy foods that are past their “sell by,” “use by” or “expiration” date.
- Avoid buying soft cheeses made from raw milk such feta, brie, camembert, blue-veined cheeses, queso fresco, queso blanco and panela. These cheeses may contain the bacteria Listeria. Instead, select hard cheeses, pasteurized cheeses and spreads, pasteurized soft cheeses, cream cheese, cottage cheese and mozzarella.
- Avoid buying refrigerated smoked or precooked seafood, such as salmon, trout, shrimp, crabmeat, tuna and mackerel. It may be labeled as “kippered” or “lox.” Instead, choose canned tuna, salmon and crabmeat, which are heat-processed to kill harmful bacteria
- Do not buy foods that are displayed in unsafe or unclean conditions.
- Avoid buying seafood salads found in deli cases or on a salad bar. Many ingredients in seafood salads support the growth of bacteria. Also, long storage times (even when properly refrigerated) allow Listeria to grow.
- Avoid buying bulging cans or swollen chilled food packages.
- Avoid food products in loose vacuum packs. The packaging should be tight around the food.
- Avoid moldy or discolored produce.
- Avoid chilled products that are not cold to the touch and frozen foods that are not frozen solid.
- Avoid hot foods that are not steaming hot.