

# FitFuture

strategies for better living.

## Series on Fitness & Nutrition for Families



### 4 Tips for Keeping Your Food Safe and Your Family Healthy

By Jennifer Kerr, MS, RD

Bacteria (germs) are all around us. Some germs can make you and your children ill. Colds and flu spread from person to person through unwashed hands and surfaces. Food can be easily contaminated by germs on hands and surfaces, causing various food-borne illnesses. Follow these tips to make sure your family members are using good hand washing and food safety practices.

# 1

**Hand washing and cleaning.** *Frequently clean hands, surfaces and utensils.*

- Wash hands in warm soapy water for 30 seconds. Encourage children to sing the ABC's while washing.
- Wash hands before handling food or eating a meal or snack, and after handling food, using the restroom, touching a pet, coughing, sneezing, etc.
- Wash kitchen tools and surfaces in hot soapy water after every use.
- Make hand washing easy for kids! Post a reminder in the restroom and placing a stepping stool near the sink for little ones.

# 2

**Separate raw and cooked food.** *Prevent bacteria from spreading from food to food.*

- Keep raw meat, fish and poultry sealed in containers or food storage bags so their juices will not leak out.
- Wash hands, utensils and surfaces after contact with raw meat, fish or poultry.
- Do not place cooked food on the same plate or cutting board as raw food.

# 3

**Chill food fast.** *Cold temperatures help keep bacteria from growing.*

- Make sure your refrigerator is maintained at 40°F or less and your freezer is maintained at 0°F. Do not rely on your temperature dial; an appliance thermometer can be left inside each to monitor the temperature. For more information visit the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News\\_&\\_Events/NR\\_051905\\_01/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/News_&_Events/NR_051905_01/index.asp)
- Chill perishable and cooked foods within 2 hours of cooking to avoid temperatures of 40°F-140°F.
- Store leftover cooked foods in small shallow containers so that they cool faster.

# 4

**Cook foods to a safe temperature.** *Kill bacteria by cooking foods properly.*

- Use a clean meat thermometer. For a guide to proper cooking temperatures visit: <http://www.fightbac.org/content/view/93/2/>
- Cook eggs until yolk and whites are firm
- Cook fish until it flakes with a fork and is no longer shiny
- Reheat leftovers to 165°