



Food Safety Tips for Older Adults

Food safety is very important for older adults. Our immune system weakens as we age, so older adults are more likely to get foodborne illness. Poor health can increase the risk. Older adults are more likely to die from some types of foodborne illness.

AVOID these foods. They're more likely to be contaminated with harmful bacteria:

- ① Rare ground beef
- ① Uncooked hot dogs and lunch meat
- ① Lox (cold-smoked fish)
- ① Raw milk and raw milk cheese (such as queso fresco)
- ① Soft cheeses (such as feta, Brie, Camembert, Roquefort)
- ① Raw eggs
- ① Unpasteurized apple cider/juice
- ① Alfalfa sprouts
- ① Bean sprouts

CHOOSE these foods instead. Heating risky foods kills harmful bacteria.

Ground beef

Cook ground beef until the pink color disappears. Cook to 160°F. if you use a thermometer. When you eat at restaurants, send pink hamburgers back for more cooking.

Hot dogs and lunch meat

Put hot dogs in a pan of boiling water. Cover with lid. Boil 5 to 7 minutes.

Heat commercially packaged or deli lunch meat before eating. Use a meat thermometer to heat chunks to 160°F. before slicing.

Smoked fish

Hot-smoked fish is safe to eat. Avoid cold-smoked fish (lox).

Cheeses

Choose cottage cheese, hard cheese (such as Cheddar), and processed cheese.

Read labels and choose pasteurized (heated) milk and cheese made from it.

Use pasteurized milk if you make queso fresco (a white Mexican-style cheese).

Eggs

Cook eggs thoroughly: over medium, hard-cooked, scrambled. Avoid foods with uncooked eggs (such as some Caesar salad dressings and egg nogs).

Apple juice/cider

Read labels and buy pasteurized (heated) juice. Pasteurize non-store bought juice by heating it in a pan on the stove until bubbles appear.

Sprouts

Until researchers find a way to make sprouts safe to eat, use lettuce (washed well) instead. Cook bean sprouts thoroughly.

Keep it Safe!

Clean often!

⊗ Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling food.

⊗ Wash them after handling eggs and raw meat, poultry and seafood, too.

⊗ Wash counters, cutting boards, and utensils after contact with raw meat and poultry. Wipe with diluted chlorine bleach (1 teaspoon in 1 quart of water).

⊗ Wash (and scrub) vegetables and fruits well in clean water.

Cook thoroughly!

⊗ Cook meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs thoroughly.

⊗ Reheat leftovers to 165°F.

Cool soon!

⊗ Keep hot foods HOT and cold foods COLD.

⊗ Don't leave cooked foods at room temperature longer than 2 to 3 hours.

⊗ Cool big pots of soups and stews quickly by refrigerating in shallow pans.

Developed by Carolyn Raab, Extension Foods and Nutrition Specialist