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# Food Safety

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# Food Safety

## Using this guide and video program

The Overview section summarizes the content of the video program. The Quiz can be given to the viewers after watching the program, and there is an Answer Key at the end of this Guide. The Questions for Discussion can be used either for an in-person discussion at the time when the video is watched or else as a written homework assignment. "Smart Moves for Cooks Concerned About Safety" is a two-page handout that gives basic recommendations for safe food handling. The sections on "Food Thermometers" and "Questions and Answers About Salmonella" go into more detail on these topics, and the "For More Information" section lists good website resources, along with a food safety telephone hotline.

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## Summary

The leading cause of foodborne illness isn't Salmonella or E Coli bacteria. It's consumer ignorance. Food poisoning is surprisingly common, but is usually mislabeled as a "bug" or "24 hour flu." Think of this program as preventive medicine.

The video displays numerous examples of dangerous food handling, including cross-contamination of tools and surfaces, lack of hand washing, use of containers ill-suited to food storage, careless handling of poultry, and failure to keep foods in a safe temperature zone.

Viewers learn the basics of preparing and storing food safely. They also learn how to avoid salmonella contamination and understand the need to take precautions in handling food.

The video presents six "Safe or Sorry?" situations, so viewers can see and understand wrong (hazardous) food handling, and right (safe) food handling. Emphasis is on understanding the "why" of food handling instead of learning a series of forgettable rules.

## Overview

Each year the U.S. alone sees millions of cases of food-borne illness. The Center for Disease Control estimates 325,000 hospital admissions and 5,000 deaths each year.

Although some cases make headlines, most food poisoning is never reported because most food-caused illness is not serious. Victims pass it off as a stomach ache or that catch-all “24 hour flu.” But “24 hour flu” doesn’t exist. Influenza doesn’t cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Symptoms of food-borne illness include upset stomach, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue, or a fever. Symptoms appear from thirty minutes to three weeks after eating contaminated food. In any case, seek medical help if the symptoms are severe.

What is the leading cause of food poisoning? It’s consumer ignorance. Many fear **potential** dangers from pesticides, genetically altered foods, hormones, or food additives, yet fail to protect against the **very real and present** risks of careless food handling.

## Safe or Sorry #1

- Bacteria are nearly invisible — it takes about thirty trillion to make an ounce. Most are helpful, we need them to live. But the bad guys get all the attention. Bacteria cause problems when they grow like crazy. And warm, moist sponges and dish towels can be growing environments for bacteria.
- Use your food preparation surfaces ONLY for food. Don't bring in germs from the mail, purses, money or dirty laundry. Keep clean anything that touches food.
- Swiping a counter with a wet towel is a bacteria re-location service, NOT cleaning.
- Use hot, soapy water to clean surfaces. Wiping them with disposable paper towels will prevent spreading bacteria to other foods.
- Keep dish towels clean. Wash them at least every two days in the hot cycle of the clothes washing machine. Hang them so they dry between uses.
- Bacteria love to grow in warm, moist sponges. After using a sponge, rinse it under hot water, then press out the water. Don't wring a sponge out as that will damage the fibers. Store the sponge where it can air dry – not under the sink.
- Every time you run the dishwasher, place sponges in the utensil container. The heat and detergent will disinfect them.
- Wash cutting boards after each use. The heat in a dishwasher's hot cycle is enough to kill germs. Hot water from the faucet is not. If your board can't be placed in the dishwasher, clean it with a mix of two teaspoons of bleach to one quart of water. Bleach does kill germs, so using the same solution to wash the sink and counters gives added safety.

## Safe or Sorry #2

- A burger that is brown in the middle is not necessarily safe. The magic number for burgers (and pork chops) is 160 degrees F.
- Salmonella is a bacteria that lives in the intestines of both humans and animals. You can't tell if a chicken has salmonella by looking at it.
- The solution? Assume it does. That's another rule of safe food handling. Assume raw food has possibly harmful bacteria. But don't panic – it causes problems only when you allow it to grow like crazy. Salmonella can't survive temperatures over 170 degrees F.
- High heat kills most (but not all) dangerous germs - that's why almost all milk sold is pasteurized. If you're camping and need to drink water from a stream, you should boil it to kill bacteria before drinking.
- That's the same reason why you need to cook chicken to an internal temperature of at least 170 degrees F.
- Use an instant-read food thermometer to be sure. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the meat. Don't let it touch a bone – you want to know the temperature of the meat, not the bones.
- The USDA recommends different internal temperatures for different meats. Keep the numbers posted in your kitchen.

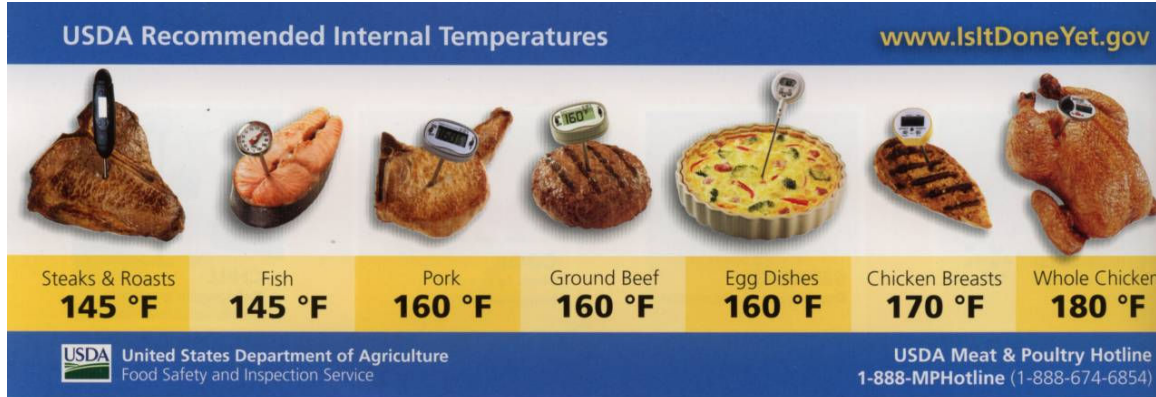


illustration from [www.IsItDoneYet.gov](http://www.IsItDoneYet.gov)

- One contaminant NOT destroyed by heat is mercury in some seafood. Some fish accumulate extra mercury and are best avoided by women who are or might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children. Shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and sport fish fall into this category.
- In addition, it is suggested that pregnant women eat very little albacore tuna, which contains more mercury than canned chunk or light tuna.

## Safe or Sorry #3

In this video sequence, a cook is preparing food and makes a number of mistakes:

- Not washing hands with hot water and soap.
- Rinsing raw chicken in the sink—which could spread live bacteria to other foods in or near the sink.
- Using a damp rag to “clean” the cutting board after cutting chicken there.
- Using the same cutting board and knife for the chicken and the veggies.
- Using the same plate to bring the cooked chicken to the table — some bacteria could be left on the plate from the raw chicken, and it could now be transferred to the cooked bird.

## Safe or Sorry #4

- Eating fruits and vegetables is healthy and we don't eat enough. But produce can carry bacteria as it is picked, packaged, shipped, or displayed for sale.
- For washing produce, running water is good enough, you don't need soap or commercial veggie washes. If you are concerned about pesticides buy certified organic foods. But you still need to wash them.
- Perishable fruits like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms should be stored in a refrigerator. Be sure to refrigerate all produce that is pre-cut or peeled.
- Bagged salad ingredients are often pre-washed – look on the bag for a statement. They can be used without further washing.
- Wax coatings (that preserve freshness) on fruits and vegetables do NOT pose a threat to your health.
- Most fruit juices sold are pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria. But fresh squeezed juices or veggies should be kept refrigerated or on ice in stores.

## Safe or Sorry #5:

Here our “food handler” is checking out leftovers—throwing out the first batch, and then tasting the next batch to see if it’s ok.

- She was safe to toss spoiled foods. A general rule in food handling is “when in doubt, throw it out.” Smelly, moldy food can make you sick.
- But she still might be sorry, because food that looks and smells OK can sometimes make you sick. Many dangerous bacteria don’t change the taste, smell, or appearance of food.
- Never taste a food you think might be spoiled or outdated. Remember, the bacteria that can cause illness cannot be tasted.
- Take the guesswork out of leftovers by marking the date you saved the food.
- A refrigerator puts bacterial growth into slow motion. Cold slows the growth of bacteria. Food still spoils in a refrigerator, but it takes longer.
- Most disease-causing organisms are a problem ONLY when they multiply and turn into an angry mob. Think of a refrigerator as a kind of crowd control for bacteria. The colder it is the more bacterial growth is slowed. A freezer just about stops their growth. In terms of safety, food can be frozen just about indefinitely, but it declines in taste and texture with time.

## Safe or Sorry #6

- On Wednesday morning a turkey is put in a pan to thaw for Thursday—safe or sorry? Sorry. Thawing foods at a warm temperature allows bacteria to multiply faster. So, thaw foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Or defrost them in a microwave or in a watertight plastic bag submerged in cold water and cook immediately.
- Monitor your refrigerator with a thermometer and keep it at or below 40 degrees F. Leave the thermometer in the fridge permanently.
- Bacteria grow best in temperatures from around 40 degrees F to 140 degrees F. That's the danger zone. You want to get food out of that danger zone as soon as possible – think of it as a two hour parking zone you want to get out of before you get a ticket.
- Refrigerating foods in large, deep pots is a food handling mistake. To make sure foods cool rapidly and evenly, use shallow, covered containers.
- Raw ground meat, poultry, and fish should be kept in the fridge no more than two days. Steaks, roasts and chops three to five days. Leftovers no more than a few days before reheating or freezing.
- Refrigerate leftovers immediately after a meal.
- Pay attention to helpful dates on food labels. Many foods have freshness codes. A “use by date” means you should eat the food by that date to protect against spoilage.

## Review: A Few Rules For Food Handling

- Never taste food you think might be bad. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Keep everything clean. That means hands, kitchen cutting boards and sinks, refrigerators, cabinets, and utensils. Always wash hands before handling food and after handling meat.
- Avoid **cross-contamination**. Assume raw food, especially chicken, contains harmful bacteria and treat it accordingly. Whatever it touches should not touch other food.
- Keep hot food hot and cooked food hot. Don't leave hot food at room temperature for more than two hours. Reheat leftovers to at least 160 degrees F.
- Pay attention to use by and sell by dates. Look at freshness codes, especially in the dairy and meat departments.
- Use a meat thermometer for cooking and keep one in your refrigerator.
- Don't panic over "killer bacteria." The most dangerous part of your shopping trip is probably the drive to the grocery store.

## Food Safety Quiz

1. Symptoms of food-borne illness include:
  - A. upset stomach
  - B. diarrhea
  - C. vomiting
  - D. fatigue
  - E. fever
  - F. all the above
  - G. only a, b, and e
2. **True or False:** Washing hands with warm water is sufficient when preparing food.
3. **True or False:** Symptoms of food-borne illness will show up within 24 hours.
4. Which statement is NOT good advice?
  - A. Use food preparation surfaces ONLY for food (not mail, purses, money...).
  - B. Use hot, soapy water to clean kitchen counters.
  - C. Always clean off your cutting board with a damp towel.
5. **True or False:** You can tell if a chicken has salmonella because the skin is slightly bluish.
6. Which statement is NOT true?
  - A. Many dangerous bacteria don't change the way food tastes, smells, and looks.
  - B. A pink color means the chicken is undercooked.
  - C. You don't need to wash organic fruits or veggies.
7. Which statement is good advice?
  - A. Thawing foods on the counter is a better idea than in the refrigerator, because it's safer and faster.
  - B. Never taste food you think might be spoiled or outdated.
  - C. Leftovers should be refrigerated within three to four hours of a meal.
8. **True or False:** Heating meat or poultry to 150 degrees F will ensure that it is safe.
9. **True or False:** Mercury contamination is destroyed by heat.
10. Cross-contamination is:
  - A. A result of not refrigerating food.
  - B. What happens when safe food gets contaminated by being exposed to contaminated food.
  - C. An event in the Triathlon.
11. **True or False:** The colder the temperature, the more bacterial growth is slowed.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Why is proper food handling important?
  
- 2a. Have you ever experienced a food-borne illness?
  
- 2b. After watching the “Food Safety” video, do you have an idea of what you could have done to prevent it?
  
3. In watching the video, what were the practical suggestions that seemed most important or useful to you?
  
4. How will you use the new knowledge you've received in this program?
  
5. How can you help your family or roommates be more aware of food safety?

## Smart Moves for Cooks Concerned About Safety

Follow these four guidelines from the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS):

- Clean – Wash hands and surfaces often.
- Separate – Don't cross-contaminate.
- Cook – Cook to proper temperatures.
- Chill – Refrigerate promptly.

### Preparation

- Keep everything clean. That means hands, kitchen cutting boards and sinks, refrigerators, cabinets, and utensils. Always wash hands with soap and hot water before and after handling food.
- Use food preparation surfaces ONLY for food. Don't bring in germs from the mail, purses, money or dirty laundry. Keep clean anything that touches food.
- Use hot, soapy water to clean surfaces. Wiping them with disposable paper towels will prevent spreading bacteria to other foods.
- Keep dish towels clean. Wash them at least every two days in the hot cycle of the clothes washing machine. Hang them so they dry between uses.
- After using a sponge, rinse it under hot water, then press out the water. Store the sponge where it can air dry – not under the sink. Every time you run the dishwasher, place sponges in the utensil container. The heat and detergent will disinfect them.
- Wash cutting boards after each use in the dishwasher, or else clean them with a mix of two teaspoons of bleach to one quart of water. This mixture can also be used to clean counters.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating. Running water is good enough, you don't need soap or commercial veggie washes. If you are concerned about pesticides, buy certified organic foods—and wash them before eating.
- Avoid Cross-Contamination. Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other food. After cutting raw meats, wash hands, cutting board, knife, and counter tops with hot, soapy water.

## Cooking

Cook meat and poultry thoroughly. Use an instant-read food thermometer when you cook. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the meat. Don't let it touch a bone – you want to know the temperature of the meat, not the bones.

The USDA recommends different internal temperatures for different meats. Keep the numbers posted in your kitchen. Here are the USDA recommended internal temperatures:

- Steaks & Roasts - 145 °F
- Fish - 145 °F
- Pork - 160 °F
- Ground Beef - 160 °F
- Egg Dishes - 160 °F
- Chicken Breasts - 170 °F
- Whole Poultry - 180 °F

## Storage

- Refrigerate or freeze perishable food, prepared foods, and leftovers within 2 hours or sooner.
- Keep hot food hot and cooked food hot. Don't leave hot food at room temperature for more than two hours. Reheat leftovers to at least 160 degrees F.
- Perishable produce (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs) should be stored in a refrigerator. Also refrigerate all produce that is pre-cut or peeled. Fresh squeezed juices should be kept refrigerated.
- Never taste food you think might be bad. When in doubt, throw it out. Take the guesswork out of leftovers by marking the date you saved the food.
- Refrigerators should be at 40 degrees F or lower inside, freezers at 0 degrees F or lower. Keep an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator to check its temperature.
- Refrigerating foods in large, deep pots is a food handling mistake. To make sure foods cool rapidly and evenly, use shallow, covered containers.
- Don't pack the refrigerator. Cool air has to circulate to keep food safe.
- Raw ground meat, poultry, and fish should be kept in the fridge no more than two days. Steaks, roasts and chops three to five days. Leftovers no more than a few days before reheating or freezing.

## Shopping

- Pay attention to “use by” and “sell by” dates. Look at freshness codes, especially in the dairy and meat departments.
- Mercury is a contaminant accumulated by some fish, and not destroyed by heat. Women who are or might become pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children should avoid shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and sport fish. In addition, both the EPA and FDA suggest pregnant women eat very little albacore tuna, which contains more mercury than canned chunk or light tuna.

## Other Tips

- Do not eat eggs with a cracked shell. Leave eggs in their carton so they don't pick up odors or lose moisture. Avoid eating raw eggs.
- Thaw foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Or defrost them in a microwave or in a watertight plastic bag submerged in cold water and cook immediately.

# Food Thermometers

Is it done yet? You can't tell by *looking*. Use a **food thermometer** to be sure.

## Thermometers Aren't Just for Turkey Anymore

These days, food thermometers aren't just for your holiday roasts—they're for all cuts and sizes of meat and poultry, including hamburgers, chicken breasts, and pork chops. Using a food thermometer when cooking meat, poultry, and even egg dishes is the only reliable way to make sure you are preparing a safe and delicious meal for your family.

## Why Use a Food Thermometer?

*Everyone is at risk for food-borne illness.* One effective way to prevent illness is to use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of meat, poultry, and egg dishes. Using a food thermometer not only keeps your family safe from harmful food bacteria, but it also helps you to **avoid overcooking**, giving you a safe and flavorful meal. Some people may be at high risk for developing food-borne illness. These include pregnant women and their unborn babies and newborns, young children, older adults, people with weakened immune systems, and individuals with certain chronic illnesses. These people should pay **extra** attention to handle food safely.

## How To Use a Food Thermometer

1. Use an instant-read food thermometer to check the internal temperature toward the end of the cooking time, but before the food is expected to be "done."
2. The food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food and should not be touching bone, fat, or gristle.
3. Compare your thermometer reading to the USDA Recommended Internal Temperatures to determine if your food has reached a safe temperature.
4. Make sure to clean your food thermometer with hot, soapy water before and after each use! Large-dial oven-safe or oven-probe thermometers may be used for the duration of cooking. Because there are so many types of food thermometers, it is important to follow the instructions for your food thermometer.

The infographic features a blue header with the text 'USDA Recommended Internal Temperatures' on the left and 'www.IsItDoneYet.gov' on the right. Below the header, seven food items are displayed in a row, each with a thermometer inserted into it. Below each item is a yellow box containing the food name and its recommended internal temperature in degrees Fahrenheit. At the bottom of the infographic, there is a blue footer containing the USDA logo and text, and the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline information.

Food Item	Recommended Internal Temperature (°F)
Steaks & Roasts	145 °F
Fish	145 °F
Pork	160 °F
Ground Beef	160 °F
Egg Dishes	160 °F
Chicken Breasts	170 °F
Whole Chicken	180 °F

USDA United States Department of Agriculture  
Food Safety and Inspection Service

USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline  
1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)

source: [www.IsItDoneYet.gov](http://www.IsItDoneYet.gov)

# Salmonella Questions and Answers

*Salmonella* is the most frequently reported cause of food borne illness. In 1996, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) documented 39,027 cases.

## **What is *Salmonella*?**

The *Salmonella* family includes over 2,300 serotypes of bacteria which are one-celled organisms too small to be seen without a microscope. Two types, *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium account for approximately half of all human infections. Strains that cause no symptoms in animals can make people sick, and vice versa. If present in food, it does not affect the taste, smell, or appearance of the food. The bacteria live in the intestinal tracts of infected animals and humans.

*Salmonella* bacteria have been known to cause illness for over 100 years. They were discovered by an American scientist, Dr. Daniel E. Salmon.

## **What is salmonellosis?**

Salmonellosis, or a *Salmonella* infection, is the illness that can occur if live *Salmonella* bacteria enter the body, usually through eating foods containing the bacteria. Salmonellosis is one of the most common bacterial food-borne illnesses, but many cases could be prevented by proper food handling practices.

## **How do *Salmonella* bacteria on food make people sick?**

Bacteria can grow on just about any food, such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and dairy products in particular, as well as vegetables and fruits, such as beans, grains, orange juice, cantaloupe, and sprouts. To survive and multiply, bacteria need time and the right conditions: food, moisture, and warm temperatures. The ideal temperature for bacterial growth is between 40° and 140°F. *Salmonella* present on raw chicken could survive if the chicken is not cooked to reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F throughout the product. *Salmonella* can also cause food-borne illness through cross-contamination; for example, juices from raw meat or poultry prepared on a cutting board could contaminate salad ingredients if the board was not washed before cutting up the salad. If this salad sat at room temperature for any length of time, the *Salmonella* would multiply to dangerous numbers. The person who eats the salad then also eats the bacteria and becomes ill.

## **What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?**

According to CDC, most people experience diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever within 8 to 72 hours after the contaminated food was eaten. Additional symptoms may be chills, headache, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms may last up to 7 days. Many people ill with salmonellosis recover without treatment and may never see a doctor. However, *Salmonella* infections can be life-threatening especially for the very young, the elderly, and for persons with impaired immune systems.

### **Are there long-term consequences?**

Persons with diarrhea usually recover completely, although it may be several months before their bowel habits are entirely normal. A small number of persons who are infected with *Salmonella* will develop pains in their joints, irritation of the eyes, and painful urination. This is called Reiter's syndrome. It can last for months or years and can lead to chronic arthritis that is difficult to treat.

### **How many people get sick from salmonellosis?**

Not all cases of food-borne illness are reported, but experts believe that anywhere from 696,000 to 3.8 million people contract salmonellosis each year. The only way to confirm salmonellosis is to conduct laboratory tests on the stools of the ill person, a process that takes several days. To overcome the difficulties caused by unreported cases, the collaborating FoodNet sites have set up a system to actively identify laboratory-confirmed cases of food-borne illnesses. This system will provide more specific numbers in the future.

### **What foods are most likely to make people sick?**

Any raw food of animal origin, such as meat, poultry, milk and dairy products, eggs, seafood, and some fruits and vegetables may carry *Salmonella* bacteria. The bacteria can survive to cause illness if these foods are not thoroughly cooked. The bacteria can also cause illness if they contaminate any other food that comes in contact with the raw food. Safe food handling practices are necessary to prevent bacteria on raw food from causing illness.

### **Are Kosher or "free-range" chickens lower in *Salmonella* bacteria?**

FSIS does not know of any valid scientific information that shows that any specific type of chicken has more or less *Salmonella* bacteria than other poultry.

### **What is USDA doing to prevent *Salmonella* contamination?**

Under USDA's new science-based inspection system, FSIS will test meat and poultry samples to identify pathogens, including *Salmonella*. For the first time ever, FSIS is requiring all plants to reduce bacteria by means of a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan and accompanying testing and performance standards. These national performance standards will be adjusted downward over time, even further reducing bacteria levels.

source: [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Salmonella\\_Questions\\_&\\_Answers/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Salmonella_Questions_&_Answers/index.asp)

## For More Information

1. A site that is advertised as the gateway to government food safety information, and a very good resource. Once at the site, click on: "Consumer Advice":

<http://www.foodsafety.gov>

2. A site that gives recommendations for safe cooking temperatures, information about thermometers, and more.

<http://www.IsItDoneYet.gov>

3. This is the site for the Food Safety and Inspection Service:

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>

At the site, go to: "Food Safety Education", then look at their Fact Sheets.

4. This site is the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition:

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/>

At the site, look at "Produce Safety" and "Seafood Safety".

5. A telephone resource for food safety questions:

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)

TTY: 1-800-256-7072

## Food Safety Quiz Answer Key

1. **F: all the above**
2. **False.** When preparing food, hands should be washed with warm water and soap for effective cleanliness.
3. **False.** Symptoms of food-borne illness may show up much as much as three weeks after the food is eaten.
4. **C. Always clean off your cutting board with a damp towel.** A damp towel just re-locates the bacteria. Cutting boards should be washed after each use in the dishwasher, or else cleaned with a mix of two teaspoons of bleach to one quart of water.
5. **False.** You can't tell if a chicken has salmonella by looking at it.
6. **C. You don't need to wash organic fruits or veggies.** You do need to wash them, as they can carry bacteria as they are picked, packaged, shipped, or displayed for sale.
7. **B. Never taste food you think might be spoiled or outdated.**
8. **False.** Different varieties of meat and poultry require different temperatures in order to be safe.
9. **False.** Mercury contamination is not destroyed by heat.
10. **B. What happens when safe food gets contaminated by being exposed to contaminated food.**
11. True