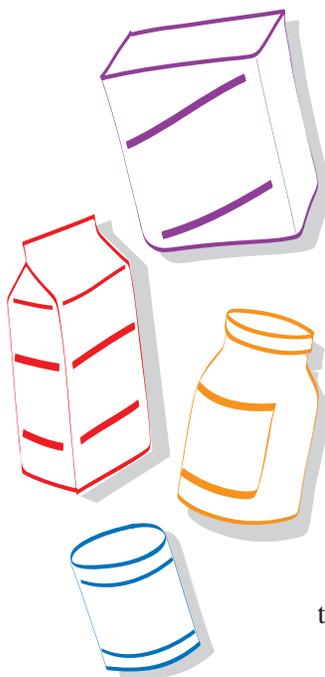# Food Tampering
An Extra Ounce of Caution

In today's world, we're all being more cautious as we go about our daily routines. And, this caution should also extend to the care we take when we shop for and prepare foods.

The deliberate tampering of food to cause major disease outbreaks is rare, particularly in the United States. However, recent news events have focused attention on the increasing possibility of such tampering.

As a result, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is enhancing its surveillance of foodborne disease and increasing the inspection of domestic and foreign food processing plants. The food industry is also stepping up safety measures to ensure that its products are produced as safely as possible.

As a consumer, you also play a role in preventing illness due to food tampering. Follow these tips to keep *you* and *your family* safe.

Buyers Be Aware

How to detect product tampering at the grocery store . . .

- **Carefully examine all food product packaging.** Be aware of the normal appearance of food containers. That way you'll be more likely to notice if an outer seal or wrapper is missing. Compare a suspect container with others on the shelf.

- **Check any anti-tampering devices on packaging.** Make sure the plastic seal around the outside of a container is intact or that the safety button on the lid of a jar is down.

- **Don't purchase products if the packaging is open, torn, or damaged.** This includes products on the shelf or in the refrigerator or freezer sections of the grocery store.

- **Don't buy products that are damaged or that look unusual.** For example, never purchase canned goods that are leaking or that bulge at the ends. Likewise for products that appear to have been thawed and then refrozen.

- **Check the "sell-by" dates** printed on some products, and only buy items within that time frame.

How to detect product tampering at home . . .

- **When opening a container, carefully inspect the product.** Don't use products that are discolored, moldy, have an off odor, or that spurt liquid or foam when the container is opened.

- **Never eat food from products that are damaged or that look unusual.** For example, cans that are leaking or that bulge at the ends.

☎ Who to Contact
4 *Steps to Reporting a Suspect Product*

1 If you suspect product tampering at the grocery store, report it to the **store manager**.

2 Once you get a commercial food product home, report a suspected tampering incident to your **local police department**.

3 If the food contains meat or poultry, call the **U.S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555**.

4 If the food does not contain meat or poultry (such as seafood, produce, or eggs), notify the Food and Drug Administration. For emergency questions, call the **FDA's 24-hour emergency number at (301) 443-1240**. For non-emergency questions, call the **FDA Food Information Line at 1-888-SAFEFOOD**.

Safe Food Preparation at Home

Most foodborne illnesses happen at home. In addition to checking for food tampering, protect your family from harmful bacteria that may be present in food.

Follow these 4 simple steps:

CLEAN
Wash hands and surfaces often

Wash hands, utensils, and surfaces in hot, soapy water before and after food preparation, and especially after preparing meat, poultry, eggs, or seafood.

DID YOU KNOW? *Twenty percent of consumers don't wash their hands and kitchen surfaces before preparing food. Clean hands and surfaces are your first step in safe food handling.*
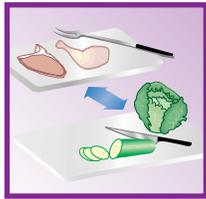
SEPARATE
Don't cross-contaminate

Cross-contamination is how bacteria can be spread from one food to another. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood, so keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

Place cooked food on a clean plate. If you put cooked food on an unwashed plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood, bacteria from the raw food could contaminate the cooked food.

DID YOU KNOW? *After marinating raw meat, poultry, or seafood, the marinade can be contaminated with harmful bacteria. Don't taste the marinade or use it on cooked foods unless you boil it first.*
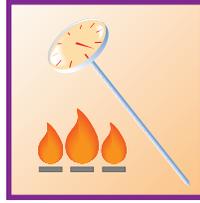
COOK
Cook to proper temperatures

Food safety experts agree that foods are properly cooked when they're heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

To make sure meat, poultry, casseroles, and other foods are cooked all the way through, use a clean food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods.

DID YOU KNOW? *Roasts and steaks should be cooked to an internal temperature of at least 145º F; chicken breasts to 170º F; and whole poultry to 180º F (take the temperature in the thigh).*

CHILL
Refrigerate promptly

Refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Set your refrigerator no higher than 40° F and the freezer unit at 0° F. Check these temperatures occasionally with an appliance thermometer.

Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food, and leftovers within two hours. Marinate foods in the refrigerator.

Don't thaw foods at room temperature. Safely thaw food (1) in the refrigerator, (2) in cold water (change the water every half-hour to keep the water cold), or (3) in the microwave if you'll be cooking the food immediately.

DID YOU KNOW? *Twenty-three percent of consumers' refrigerators are not cold enough.*

FIGHT BAC!
Keep Food Safe From Bacteria

U.S. FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

For more information on handling food safely, contact: The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Food Information Line** at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (toll-free), 24 hours a day. Or visit FDA's Food Safety Web site at: **www.cfsan.fda.gov**

Media inquiries only — contact the FDA Press Office at (301) 436-2335 (do not print this number in any publication).