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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*

## **Food Safety: Strategies for Families<sup>1</sup>**

*Amy Simonne and Donna Davis<sup>2</sup>*

Living in Europe many years ago, I remember being struck by the instruction to wash all our fresh fruits and vegetables in Clorox® before we ate them! Yuck! Did we want to take the risk of consuming germs or eating dangerous by-products of bleach? Neither one was very appetizing. My mom opted for germs and apparently we survived.

With so many options for consumers at the grocery store or your favorite farmer's market, how can you know that your food is safe? Consumers can avoid foodborne illness by following a few simple recommendations: wash your hands, clean food contact surfaces often, wash fruits and vegetables (no bleach necessary), and don't wash meat or poultry. Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing or storing foods. Also, cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms, using a food thermometer. A list of safe cooking temperatures for meat, poultry, fish, etc., can be found at the USDA web site ([http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/How\\_Temperatures\\_Affect\\_Food/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/How_Temperatures_Affect_Food/index.asp)) or at your local county Extension service.

Other important steps to insure food safety include refrigerating perishable foods promptly and defrosting foods properly. Consumers need to also understand that new food safety information is constantly emerging. Recommendations and precautions, particularly

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for people at high risk, are updated as scientists understand more about preventing food-borne illness.

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