

Fresh Cut Produce: Safe Handling Practices for Consumers¹

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A variety of fruits and vegetables should be part of one's healthy diet. However, several foodborne illnesses have been traced to fresh produce. Although fresh cut produce are washed and sanitized before marketing, they are not germ free. You can take steps to reduce your own risk of foodborne illness from fresh cut produce.



Where You Shop:

- Fresh cut produce needs to be refrigerated or surrounded by ice to control growth of microbe. Only purchase produce that is displayed properly in the store.
- Inspect each package carefully for any sign of tampering. If in doubt, ask the produce manager for information.

At Home:

- Refrigerate fresh cut produce promptly.
- Leftover fresh cut produce should be discarded after two hours at room temperature.
- Avoid touching fresh cut produce with your bare hand, especially if it will be served raw. Use a spoon or fork.

During Preparation:

- Wash hands with hot soapy water before and after:
 - handling fresh produce
 - handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
 - using the bathroom
 - changing diapers
 - handling pets
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops often. Use hot soapy water and rinse well. **Sanitize** them after contact with fresh produce, or raw meat, poultry, or seafood (see box).
- Sanitize kitchen sink frequently to avoid a build up of microbes.
- Don't cross contaminate! Use clean cutting boards and utensils for fresh produce.

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- If you can, use separate cutting boards for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- Do not consume ice that has come in contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or ice gel packs when you take perishable foods outdoors. This includes cut fresh fruits and vegetables.

To sanitize cutting boards, dishes, and utensils:
Mix one teaspoon chlorine bleach in one quart water.
Pour the mixture onto all surfaces or submerge appropriate items into the above solution and let sit at least one minute.
Rinse surfaces well with hot running water.

Counter tops can be sanitized by using the above solution mix, sanitizing sprays or wipes as an additional safety measure.

Following these steps will help reduce your risk of foodborne illness from fresh cut produce.

For More Information:

Visit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website at: <http://www.fda.gov> or call FDA Consumer Inquiries at 1-888-SAFEFOOD (a toll-free number).

