Get the facts on food safety

As Public Health Inspectors, one of the ways we work to protect the health of Canadians is by ensuring food safety best practices are being followed at food establishments and grocery stores. Unfortunately, your home is unlikely to be on our list of places to inspect. Here's how you can bring food safety best practices to your home, avoid getting sick from badly prepared food, and help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Bringing groceries into your home

▸ Tidy up and properly clean and sanitize the area where you will place your grocery bags. This could be a counter, a table, or a space on the floor.

▸ Bring your groceries in and place them in the cleaned area, making sure to keep food products and produce separate from raw meats, poultry, and fish to prevent contamination.

▸ Put your groceries away as usual. Keep raw meat, poultry, and fish separate from other foods so that the raw juices don't contaminate other foods. Store these foods in the refrigerator at <4°C or colder. Refrigerating foods keeps bacteria from growing and multiplying in foods.

▸ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

▸ Wipe down and sanitize any surfaces you or your groceries may have touched before being put away. This includes door handles, light switches, the area where you placed the grocery bags, countertops, and garbage bin lids.

Preparing food at home

▸ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

▸ Wipe down and sanitize any surfaces you or the food you intend to prepare may come into contact with. This includes tabletops, countertops, door handles, and light switches.

▸ Use clean plates and cutlery.

▸ Wash produce with running water prior to consuming it. There is no need to use detergents or special soaps.

▸ Cook all raw meats, poultry, and fish to 74°C prior to eating. Check the internal temperature of the food with a food thermometer.

▸ If you touch any raw meats, poultry, or fish, wash your hands with soap and water before eating.
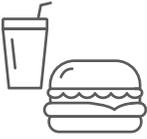
Getting take-out food and drinks

▶ Before your food order arrives, tidy up and properly clean and sanitize the area where you will place your take-out bags. This could be a countertop or tabletop.

▶ When your take-out order arrives (or once you arrive home after picking it up), bring your take-out bags inside and place them in the cleaned area.

▶ Wipe down and sanitize any surfaces you or your take-out bags may come into contact with. This includes tabletops, countertops, door handles, and light switches.

▶ Use clean plates and cutlery.

▶ Ensure that you consume your food order within two hours of preparation, and reheat any leftovers to 74°C (until they are piping hot).

▶ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to eating.
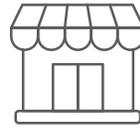
Visiting food service establishments

▶ Your food establishment will wipe down and sanitize any surfaces, and clean and sanitize your plates and glassware. Regardless, as you are not at home, it is best practice to avoid touching your face while you are out to ensure that you do not accidentally transmit viruses or bacteria.

▶ Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds prior to eating. If you do not have access to a handwashing station, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content can be effective.

▶ If you are taking any leftovers home, reheat them to 74°C (until they are piping hot) and before consuming them, wash your hands with soap and water.

Myth-buster

Can I get sick from eating food that someone with COVID-19 has touched?

In all studies worldwide, there is no indication that COVID-19 is transmitted by eating food contaminated with the virus. Good to go!

About us

The Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) is a national professional association representing environmental health professionals working as Public Health Inspectors, Environmental Health Officers, Community Care Licensing Officers, infection control personnel, and consultants. Through our work with provincial and regional health authorities, health counties, tribal councils, and provincial and federal governments and ministries, environmental public health professionals play a vital role in protecting the health of all Canadians.

Looking for more best practices on how to protect yourself and prevent the spread of COVID-19?

See our website at www.ciphi.ca/covid.