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Before You Take That Bite...

Food safety: how often do you really think about it? Perhaps, only when you open that container of leftovers in the fridge to do the “sniff of inquiry”?

One can never be too careful. There are many active bacteria that can hurt you – or be fatal – that are undetectable by sight, smell, or taste. So, we invite you to take a few moments and *ReFresh* yourself with key tips and facts related to food safety.

What’s the Big Deal?

One in eight British Columbians get food poisoning every year.

Foodborne illnesses can be caused by many germs or contaminants. Food can be contaminated with any of the following:

- Bacteria
- Viruses
- Parasites that can live in the intestines
- Poisons, also called toxins
- Bacteria that carry or make toxins
- Molds that make toxins

Frequently, people do not realize they are struggling from food poisoning as they can get sick hours or even several days after eating contaminated food. [Check out this chart](#) of various contaminants and their gestation period and symptoms. Some contaminants are in the body for a long time before the impact is felt.

Most people who experience food poisoning are sick for a few days, and then get better. Sometimes, though, food poisoning causes severe illness or complications. Foodborne illness can be life-threatening, especially for vulnerable people such as children, pregnant women, the elderly, and individuals with weak immune systems.

Four Basic Rules

Check out this NPR podcast: [How long do leftovers last? And other food safety questions, answered](#)

According to both the podcast and the BC Center for Disease Control, there are four basic rules for keeping food safe:

Clean

Wash hands and surfaces often. Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Wash cutting boards, utensils, and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you move to the next food item. Wash all fruits and vegetables, including those whose skin you do not eat, such as cantaloupe. Never wash meats and poultry.

Separate

Cross-contamination can lead to all sorts of foodborne illness, so keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs apart from other foods, beginning in your grocery cart and continuing to your kitchen.

Cook

Find, calibrate, and use your food thermometer to cook foods to their designated safe internal temperatures. When it comes to reheating food, remember that leftovers will keep for three to four days in the fridge. [Use this handy guide](#) to apply the right safe temperature to each type of food.

Chill

Keep the fridge at 4 degrees Celsius (40 degrees Fahrenheit) or below.

Refrigerate cooked and perishable food within two hours – or within one hour, if you are in an environment that is warmer than 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) – to avoid the bacteria danger zone. Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold.

Watch this 2:30 video refresher on [how to be food safe](#).

For more details visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/food-safety.html>

Sources

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/food-poisoning/symptoms-causes/syc-20356230>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/keeping-bc-healthy-safe/food-safety>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/prevention-public-health/food-safety>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.