



Squeaky Clean: How to Properly Wash and Handle Produce

- Did you know approximately 48 million people get sick each year from food contaminated with harmful bacteria?
- Harmful bacteria may be in the soil or water where produce grows and can come in contact with and contaminate. Produce can also become contaminated after it is harvested, such as during storage or preparation.
- There are ways to keep you and your family safe from food poisoning! First and foremost, wash your hands before handling/preparing produce.

1. Buying Produce

- Buy produce that is not bruised or damaged. If buying pre-cut or pre-packaged produce, choose items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- Make sure raw meats, poultry, and seafood is bagged separately from fresh fruits and vegetables.



2. Store Produce Properly

- All produce - like strawberries or lettuce, including pre-cut or packaged - should be stored in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40 degrees or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer to check.

3. Separating Your Produce

- Keep all fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw away from raw meat, poultry, and seafood and from kitchen utensils used for those products.
- Wash all cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with soap and hot water between preparing raw meat, poultry, and seafood and preparing produce that will not be cooked.
- Use at least one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- If you use plastic or wooden cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after each use.

Safety First! Make sure you have an adult to help you to cut your produce!

4. Preparing Your Produce

- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruit and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Throw away any produce that looks rotten.
- Wash all produce well under running water before preparing, even if you do not plan to eat the skin. DO NOT wash produce with soap and/or with bleach. It can make you sick!
- Scrub firm produce such as melons and cucumbers with a clean produce brush.
- After washing, dry produce with a clean cloth towel or a paper towel.¹



See, brushing isn't only just for teeth!

¹ Source: U.S. Food & Drug Administration. "Food Facts." February 2018. <https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/selecting-and-serving-produce-safely>