

# FACTSHEET



## THE INVISIBLE ENEMY: BACTERIA

Despite the fact that Canada's food supply is among the safest in the world, sometimes the food we eat can make us sick. Under the right conditions, an invisible enemy called "BAC" (bacteria) may be present on foods.

Scientists have learned these important facts about bacteria:

- Bacteria are an integral part of our environment and play many beneficial, but sometimes harmful roles. They are found on all raw agricultural products.
- Harmful bacteria can be transferred from food to people, people to food, or from one food to another.
- Bacteria can grow rapidly at room temperature.
- Growth of harmful bacteria in food may be slowed or stopped by refrigerating or freezing.
- Foodborne illness can produce symptoms from mild to very serious. Illness can occur 30 minutes to two weeks after eating food containing harmful bacteria.
- People who are most likely to become sick from food-related illness are infants and young children, senior citizens and people with weakened immune systems.

Everyone can prevent foodborne illness if they learn how to *Fight BAC!*<sup>TM</sup>

For more information about *Fight BAC!*<sup>TM</sup> visit the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education website, at: [www.canfightbac.org](http://www.canfightbac.org)

## FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO *Fight BAC!*<sup>TM</sup>

**CLEAN** - Always wash your hands, utensils and cooking surfaces with soap and hot water before you handle food, repeatedly while you prepare it, and again when you've finished. Sanitize countertops, cutting boards and utensils with a mild bleach and water solution. All produce should be washed under cool running water prior to eating or cooking.

**SEPARATE** - Keep certain foods, like meats and their juices, separated from others during storage and preparation. Keep separate cutting boards for raw meats and vegetables. Always keep foods covered.

**COOK** - Prepare foods quickly, cook them thoroughly, and serve them immediately. Don't let foods linger at temperatures where bacteria can grow. The danger zone is between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F).

**CHILL** - Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Make sure the refrigerator is set at a temperature of 4°C (40°F) or colder, and keep the freezer set at -18°C (0°F).

Following these simple practices can help you reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

