



SAFE HANDLING OF FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Fresh fruits and vegetables can be a real treat for your household, make excellent after-school snacks, and add color and variety to the diet. Follow these tips to keep fresh fruits and vegetables safe to eat.

- **Grow fruits and vegetables using safe gardening practices.** If you have a garden, be sure to take care when growing fruits and vegetables, since they are often eaten raw. Keep dogs and cats away from growing produce, and use only composted manure for fertilizer.
- **Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables** before eating, chopping, peeling or cooking with clean, running water. Harmful bacteria have been found on fruits and vegetables growing on farms. Don't use soap. Use a colander to rinse delicate berries. It's best not to rinse fresh produce until just before eating or preparing. Rinsed produce decays more quickly in the refrigerator.



- **Store fresh fruits and vegetables for maximum enjoyment.**
 - **Apples, peaches, pears, oranges, grapes.** Store in the refrigerator to help prevent spoilage.
 - **Bananas.** Store on the counter for best flavor and quality.
 - **Berries.** Keep refrigerated. Berries are very perishable.
 - **Green beans, green peas.** Store in the refrigerator to help prevent spoilage.
 - **Broccoli, cabbage, carrots, celery.** Store in the refrigerator to help prevent spoilage.
 - **Lettuce, spinach and other leafy greens.** These items are highly perishable and must be kept in the refrigerator to ensure a safe and healthy meal.
 - **Corn-on-the-cob.** Store in the refrigerator. It loses quality rapidly.

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- **Tomatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, summer squash.** Store in a cool location on the counter (away from direct sunlight), moving them to the refrigerator if they begin to soften or if they are chopped or sliced.
- **Herbs.** Once cut, herbs such as parsley and cilantro are very perishable and should be kept refrigerated.
- **Sweet potatoes.** Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dry location. Refrigerate only after cooking.
- **White potatoes.** Store in a cool, dry location. White potatoes may be refrigerated to help prevent sprouting (spoilage).
- **Winter squash.** Store hard winter squash such as butternut or acorn squash in a cool, dry location. Winter squash may retain quality for 4 to 6 months after harvest.



- **Refrigerate all cut or prepared fruits and vegetables.** Whether you cut or peel fruits and vegetables at home, or you receive them ready-to-eat, be sure to refrigerate once they are cut or peeled. Use a reusable ice pack if you pack cut carrots or apple slices in school lunches. The cold temperature will keep cut produce safe and prevent spoilage.
- **Choose fruit or vegetable juices that are pasteurized.** Fruit or vegetable juices can be an easy way to add nutrients to your diet. Consume only pasteurized juices. The package will tell you if the juice is pasteurized. Pasteurization destroys harmful bacteria that might be present. Juice in the refrigerator at the grocery or food pantry should be kept refrigerated. Juice from the shelf should be refrigerated after opening.

