USDA:Safe Handling of Produce Cuts Illness Risk

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

SILVER SPRING (PRNewswire-USNewswire) — Whether from a supermarket, farm stand, or your very own garden, fresh fruits and vegetables are highlights of summertime. But, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration reminds you that safe handling of produce and fresh-squeezed juice is especially important because foodborne bacteria multiply faster in warm weather – and what's more, these foods are often consumed raw.

To keep nutritious produce and fresh-squeezed juices safe, follow these food safety tips to prevent food poisoning:

Buy right. Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. When selecting pre-cut produce, choose only those that are refrigerated or on ice. Bag fresh fruits and vegetables and keep them separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood in your cart and shopping bags.

Store properly. Keep perishable fresh fruits and vegetables in a clean refrigerator at 40 °F or below, and always refrigerate produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled.

Prepare safely. Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. If it looks rotten, discard it!

Wash thoroughly. Wash all produce under running water before eating, cutting, or cooking. This includes produce grown at home or purchased from a grocery store or farmers' market. For pre-packaged produce, read the label – if it says pre-washed and ready-to-eat, you can use it without further washing. And even if you plan to peel a fruit or vegetable, it's important to wash it first so dirt and bacteria are not transferred from the outside to the inside.

Prevent cross contamination. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops with soap and hot water between the preparation of raw meat, poultry, and seafood and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked. If you use plastic or other non-porous cutting boards, run them through the dishwasher after use. Andalways wash hands before and after preparing food!

Check your juice. Children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems risk serious illnesses or even death from drinking juices that have not been pasteurized or otherwise treated to control harmful bacteria. Look for pasteurized or otherwise treated products in your grocers' refrigerated sections, frozen food cases, or in non-refrigerated containers, such as juice boxes, bottles, or cans. Untreated juices sold in refrigerated cases of grocery or health food stores, cider mills, and farmers' markets must contain a warning label indicating that the product has not been pasteurized. However, warning labels are not required for juice or

cider that is fresh-squeezed and sold by the glass. So remember: if you are unsure if a juice product is pasteurized – be sure to ask!

Remember, always practice the Four Steps to Food Safety: clean hands and surfaces often; separate raw meats from other foods; cook to the right temperatures; and chill foods promptly.

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