

FOOD SAFETY MYTHS EXPOSED

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This fact sheet looks at some common food safety myths that can lead to poor food safety practices and the increased risk of food poisoning incidents.

Myth 1

Food that drops on the floor is safe to eat if picked up within 3-5 seconds

Not true. Floors are more often than not contaminated with harmful bacteria that will immediately attach to food. Food that drops to the floor should not be eaten or mixed in with other foods to be eaten at a later time.

Myth 2

It is okay to eat mouldy food once the mouldy section is removed.

Mouldy food should not be consumed. Visible mould is usually an indicator that the food is more thoroughly contaminated. Fungi, bacteria and toxins can be present in areas of the food that are not visible, so what looks like a small area of contamination could be much larger.

Myth 3

If I peel fruit and vegetables, I do not need to wash them

The peeling process will expose fresh produce to cross-contamination by transferring chemicals and harmful bacteria to the edible, internal layers of the food. Soil particles and dirt contain contaminants and are often found on fresh produce. It is therefore important to thoroughly wash fruit and vegetables before and after peeling.



Myth 4

Food needs to look, taste or smell bad to cause food poisoning

Food does not need to look, smell or taste bad to be contaminated and cause food poisoning. This can be due to the ability of some bacteria to produce harmful toxins in the food.



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Myth 5

Cooking kills bacteria

This is only partly true. Some bacteria produce spores and toxins that are not destroyed by cooking, increasing their ability to cause foodborne illness. Good food safety handling practices can minimise the risk.



Myth 6

You should not place hot food immediately in the refrigerator

Not true. It is important however to ensure that large quantities of food are divided into smaller portions and placed in shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator and that the refrigerator is not overcrowded. Bacteria multiply rapidly at temperatures between 5 degrees and 60 degrees celsius.

Myth 7

I've been handling food this way for years without anyone getting sick

You would likely not know. Many food poisoning incidents go under reported or unreported. Each year in Australia, it is estimated there are 5.4 million cases of food borne illness, 18,000 hospital admissions and 120 deaths with a cost to the economy of approximately \$1.2 billion. (Source: OZ Food Net, Department of Health and Ageing)



Myth 8

An upset stomach is the worst outcome of food poisoning.

While this may be true on some occasions, there are times when food poisoning can result in long-term conditions such as kidney failure, meningitis, stillbirths, Guillain-Barre Syndrome and hemorrhagic colitis. Diarrhoea, headache, vomiting and dehydration are the more common symptoms generally associated with food poisoning.

For more information

Visit www.logan.qld.gov.au or contact an Environmental Health Officer on **(07) 3412 3412**