

## **Cleaning and Sanitizing Your Kitchen**

One way to prevent foodborne illness is a clean kitchen. The kitchen is the main place for eating and food preparation, so it is a hot spot for all types of disease-causing microorganisms (pathogens) that can cause foodborne illness. Dangerous bacteria can lurk around countertops, surface areas of the kitchen, and on appliances. Bacteria can be on a surface that appears to be clean.

### **Prevent Foodborne Illness**

Cleanliness in the kitchen is a crucial component in reducing the risk of foodborne illness. Salmonella, Campylobacter, and Norovirus are the most common microorganisms that cause foodborne illness in the kitchen. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) uses a two-step method in restaurants and other food service operations. This method can be used in your home kitchen. The USDA process involves cleaning first and then sanitizing second to avoid the spread of microorganisms.

*Clean:* The first step is to clean the kitchen surfaces and sink with warm, soapy water to remove residues such as dirt and other debris that might be visible. Surfaces include counters, appliances, cutting boards, dishes, knives, utensils, pots, and pans. Rinse with clean water. Air dry or dry with a clean, single-use paper towel. Paper towels are ideal for cleaning because they can be used once and thrown away. This prevents bacteria from multiplying and being spread throughout the kitchen. If clean kitchen clothes or towels are used, they should be replaced daily and washed frequently in a washing machine on the hot cycle. Sponges are not recommended for kitchen use because they have deep crevices where bacteria can hide and spread from one surface to another.

Cleaning is an important step in removing bacteria from the kitchen. Pathogenic bacteria can survive on surfaces for a long time. For example, Campylobacter can live for up to 4 hours in your kitchen, and salmonella can live for up to 32 hours. Cleaning with warm, soapy water will remove dirt, grime, and some bacteria from the surface but will not kill bacteria.

*Sanitize:* After cleaning, the next step is sanitizing to reduce any remaining bacteria to a safe level. There are a variety of sanitizers you can use at home. Some wipes that were originally designed for bathrooms, not to wipe hands or clean counters, may act as a chemical contaminant on food surfaces.

Spray or pour the sanitizing solution on surfaces. Leave sanitizer on the surface for the suggested amount of time. Dry with a clean paper towel or allow to air dry. Be sure the surfaces are completely dry before using them or the sink again. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on the label if using commercial sanitizers. Some commercial sanitizers require food surfaces to be rinsed after use. Sanitizing is most effective on clean surfaces. So, don't skip the clean step! Also, remember to wash your hands after the surface is cleaned and sanitized.

Effective cleaning involves both sanitizing and cleaning surfaces BEFORE and AFTER use. To prevent chemical contamination of food, never reuse cleaning product containers and keep chemicals away from foods.

Cleanliness in the kitchen begins before you start to prepare food. Everything that comes into contact with your hands or food must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. Harmful bacteria that are not visible may thrive and multiply in food prepared by unclean hands in an unclean kitchen, so before preparing food, get off to a clean start. Follow this two-step method to leave your kitchen spotless and eliminate the pathogens you can't see.