

How Restaurants Prepare and Cook Chicken

EHS-Net Study Findings and Recommendations

Chicken is commonly linked with foodborne illness, with most of these illnesses coming from *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* germs. Illness linked to chicken can come from cross contamination. This occurs when raw, contaminated chicken touches other foods or kitchen equipment. Illness can also come from cooked chicken not reaching a high enough temperature (165°F) to kill any germs that might be inside it.

We don't know much about how restaurants prepare and cook chicken. If we learn more, we can improve how restaurants prepare and cook chicken and can lower the number of foodborne illness outbreaks.

What the Study Described

This study described how restaurants prepare and cook chicken and whether they follow FDA advice.

What the Study Found

We found that many restaurants did not follow FDA's advice when preparing and cooking chicken.

Study Results

Preparation

Most managers said their restaurants had a cleaning policy about equipment and surfaces used when preparing raw chicken. Most, but not all, of these policies included the three steps recommended by U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- washing,
- rinsing, and
- sanitizing.

Cooking

Less than half of the kitchen managers we talked to

- Knew the temperature to which chicken should be cooked (165°F).
- Said that their food workers use a thermometer to tell when chicken is fully cooked.

EHS-Net found that many restaurants do not follow the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) advice for preparing and cooking chicken.



This study was conducted by the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net). EHS-Net is a federally funded collaboration of federal, state, and local environmental health specialists and epidemiologists working to better understand the environmental causes of foodborne and waterborne illness. Visit EHS-Net at <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet>.

EHS-Net Recommends

Restaurant management and food safety programs should work to improve chicken preparation and cooking. Efforts should focus on creating training and prevention programs that focus on

- Lessening the chances for raw chicken to contaminate other food or equipment.
- Cooking chicken to the temperature recommended by FDA (165°F).



Key Terms

Cross contamination: spread of germs from one surface or food to another by contact.

Environmental health specialists: public health workers who enforce health and safety standards related to food and other consumer products.

Foodborne illness: an illness caused by germs in food.

Foodborne illness outbreak: when two or more people have the same sickness after eating food from the same place.

Salmonella and Campylobacter: germs that cause foodborne illness.

Sanitize: process to clean and disinfect a surface that will come in contact with food; involves using heat and/or chemicals.