



Cochise County Environmental Health

Preventing Cross-Contamination

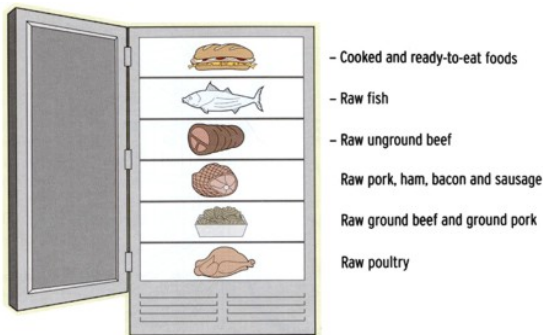
Cross-contamination is the transfer of a contaminant (like bacteria) from one source to another. Cross-contamination of food is a common cause of foodborne illness. Foods can become contaminated by microorganisms from many different sources during the food preparation and storage procedures. Preventing cross-contamination is a top priority to prevent or eliminate foodborne illness. Cross-contamination of food can occur:

- Food to Food
- Equipment to Food
- People to Food

Food to Food Cross-Contamination

Food can become contaminated by bacteria from other foods. This type of cross-contamination is especially dangerous if raw foods come into contact with cooked foods. For example, raw meat stored on a top shelf may drip onto cooked vegetables placed on a lower shelf.

- Store all raw food below ready-to-eat foods in the refrigerator.
- Ready-to-eat food should always be stored on the top shelf in the refrigerator.
- Store raw fish, meats and poultry by their cooking temperatures.



Equipment to Food

Cross-contamination can also occur from kitchen

equipment and utensils to food. This type of contamination occurs because the equipment or utensils were not properly cleaned and sanitized between each use. In order to prevent food from becoming contaminated by microorganisms present on equipment, practice the following:

- Use separate equipment for each type of food. For example, use one set of cutting boards, utensils, and containers for raw poultry, another set for raw meat, and yet another for produce. Colored cutting boards and utensil handles can help keep equipment separate.
- Clean and sanitize all work surfaces, equipment, and utensils after each task. To prevent microorganisms from contaminating food, you must wash, rinse, and sanitize the equipment.
- Ensure proper chemical sanitizing concentrations are used.
- Prep ready-to-eat food before your prep raw animal foods.

People to Food

In order to prevent food from becoming contaminated through people contact, practice the following:

- Wash your hands thoroughly between handling different foods.
- Avoid touching your face, skin and hair or wiping your hands on cleaning cloths/apron.
- Don't touch or prepare food if you have cuts or sores without using a double barrier, such as a bandage and a glove.
- Use gloves, appropriate utensils, or deli tissues when handling ready-to-eat foods.