

Internal Temperature of 165° F Needed for Chicken to Prevent Foodborne Illness

Does chicken have to be cooked to one uniform temperature, or can it be eaten like steak — rare, medium rare, medium or well done?

Great question, considering that American consumers eat more chicken than any other meat, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

However, unlike steak, all chicken dishes should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F to ensure that they are cooked thoroughly enough to kill any pathogens that could cause a foodborne illness, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's best to use a food thermometer placed in the thickest part of the chicken to make sure it is cooked to a safe internal temperature of 165 degrees F.

Raw chicken can be contaminated with the bacterial pathogens *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and *Clostridium perfringens*, the CDC says. So if you eat undercooked chicken or other foods or beverages contaminated by raw chicken or its juices, you could get a foodborne illness.

In fact, about 1 million people get sick from eating poultry that's contaminated with harmful pathogens every year, according to CDC estimates.

To lessen your risk of developing a foodborne illness when cooking or eating chicken, the CDC recommends:

- When shopping, place any packages of raw chicken into a disposable bag before putting it in your shopping cart or refrigerator to prevent raw juices from getting onto other foods.
- [Wash your hands](#) with warm soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling raw chicken.
- Use a separate cutting board for raw chicken.
- Never place cooked food or fresh produce on a plate, cutting board or other surface that held raw chicken.
- Wash cutting boards, utensils, dishes and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing chicken and before you prepare the next item.
- If you think the chicken you are served at a restaurant or anywhere

else is not fully cooked, send it back for more cooking.

- Refrigerate or freeze leftover chicken within 2 hours or within 1 hour if the temperature outside is higher than 90 degrees F.

It's also important to remember that you shouldn't wash raw chicken before cooking it. Rinsing or washing chicken doesn't kill any pathogens that may be on the chicken. But when you wash or rinse raw chicken, you are likely splashing chicken juices that can spread pathogens in the kitchen and contaminate other foods, utensils and countertops, the CDC says.

This is a problem because pathogens such as *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella* can survive on surfaces like countertops for up to 32 hours, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service. (Author: Turner, T. (2017). *Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, OSU Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.*)

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