

# EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

## Proper Food Hygiene.. It's Essential



**Did you know!** that the number of bacteria in food doubles every 15 minutes at room temperature? That is why proper food safety is so crucial. Even though we may have to double our bacteria-fighting efforts during the summer due to higher temperatures and the popularity of barbecues, the same common-sense rules apply year-round.

### Cooking Times:

Cooking food is an excellent way to prevent germs from multiplying. Be careful: cooking doesn't eliminate all micro-organisms! To effectively kill all bacteria, food must be cooked at a sufficiently high temperature for a sufficiently long period of time. For example, salmonella bacteria (primarily found in poultry) are killed when subjected to temperatures above 65°C (149°F) for at least 15 minutes. However, prolonged cooking can also affect the taste of food and reduce the nutritional value. As always, the key is to find the right balance.

### Refrigeration Does Not Kill Bacteria

Contaminated food cannot be decontaminated simply by refrigerating it. Refrigeration only slows down or temporarily halts bacterial growth; it does not prevent it. So always make sure that products are stored at the correct temperature, as indicated on the packaging. In addition, you should never refreeze food or eat food that has been refrozen. So use your refrigerator to store food, not to kill bacteria!

### From Kitchen to Lunchbox

Deli meats are often our first choice when we're making a sandwich, even though they're filled with salt, sugar and preservatives. If that sounds like you, it might be time to rethink your culinary habits! Why not replace the usual cold cuts with a creation of tuna and capers, veggie pâté, cheese and grated carrots or even black beans, tomatoes and coriander? Just remember to keep it all refrigerated!

### Food Safety Tips

#### Food origin

Find out where the foods you eat come from. Although it is not a guarantee of safety, knowing where your food comes from may be useful in the event of a disease outbreak in a food production chain. You'll also have a better idea as to the quality and freshness of the food you eat.

#### Use-by dates

Respecting use-by dates is the least we can do to minimize the risk of food poisoning. Virtually all foods have a best before date. Always check these dates and follow them to the letter!

#### Food preparation

When preparing food, make sure that all utensils and work surfaces are spotlessly clean! Always make sure that cooked food and raw food are kept apart to eliminate any chance of contamination. In addition, dishcloths should be washed and sponges should be disinfected with bleach on a regular basis.

#### Food storage

Always follow the storage instructions on the package. If in doubt, throw it out! It is better to be safe than sorry!

### Plan Administrator

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