Safely cooking food is a matter of temperature. Foods need to reach a high enough internal temperature to kill bacteria that can cause foodborne illness.

**Color is Not a Reliable Indicator of Safety**

- Color and texture are not reliable indicators of whether food has reached a high enough internal temperature to destroy pathogens.
- According to USDA research, 1 in 4 hamburgers turns brown before reaching a safe internal temperature.
- The best way to ensure safety is to use a food thermometer.

**Check with a Food Thermometer**

- **Use a food thermometer** to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, egg products, leftovers and casseroles are cooked to safe temperatures to destroy any harmful bacteria.
- Compare your thermometer reading to the chart to make sure food has been cooked to a safe temperature.
- Food thermometers should be placed in the **thickest part of food**, making sure not to touch bone, fat or gristle.
- **Clean your food thermometer** with hot water and soap after each use.
- For information about calibrating your food thermometers, check out the [Thermometers and Food Safety Web page](https://www.fightbac.org) from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

**Partnership for Food Safety Education**

We develop and promote effective education programs to reduce foodborne illness risk for consumers.

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Microwave to Safe Temperatures

Read and follow package cooking instructions.
- Most prepared convenience foods are not ready to eat right out of the container.

Know when to use a microwave or conventional oven.
- Sometimes proper cooking requires the use of a conventional oven, not a microwave.
- Some convenience foods may be shaped irregularly or are thicker in some areas and may not cook evenly in a microwave oven. It is important to use the appliance and the method recommended on the label.

Know your microwave wattage before microwaving food.
- If your microwave’s wattage is lower than the wattage mentioned in the label’s instructions, it will take longer than the instructions say to cook the food to a safe internal temperature.

Always use a food thermometer to ensure a safe internal temperature.
- Use a food thermometer to test food in several places to make sure it has reached a safe internal temperature.
- For more information on microwaving foods to safe temperatures, check out the Cook it Safe! fact sheet at fightbac.org.

Important Cooking Tips to Remember: Entertaining and On-the-Go Foods
- When entertaining and serving hot food buffet-style, use a chafing dish, warming tray or slow-cooker to keep food hot.
- When bringing hot foods to a party or traveling with hot foods, transport them in insulated thermal containers. Keep containers closed until serving time.

SAFE MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURES

Beef, pork, veal and lamb
145°F with a three-minute “rest time” after removal from the heat source

Ground meats
160°F

Poultry
Whole birds: 165°F
Parts: 165°F

Eggs and egg dishes
160°F; Cook eggs until both the yolk and the white are firm; scrambled eggs should not be runny

Leftovers
165°F

Fruits
145°F

GUIDELINES FOR SEAFOOD

Finfish
145°F

Shrimp, lobster, crabs
Flesh pearly and opaque

Scallops
Milky white, opaque and firm

Clams, oysters and mussels
Shells open during cooking

Download and print this chart here.