4 Ways to Make Safer Food Selections  
Your Guide to Safer Eating Out and Taking Out

Introduction
You're probably already taking precautions against foodborne illness at home, but you need to be careful when you are away from home too. Here are four easy steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones when you are selecting foods that are ready to eat at a restaurant, delicatessen, take-out counter, or grocery store.

1. Be aware of Raw or Undercooked Foods
Foods from animals such as meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, and eggs when eaten raw or undercooked sometimes contain harmful viruses and bacteria that can pose a risk of foodborne illness. Young children, pregnant women, older adults, and those with compromised immune systems are particularly vulnerable. You are at increased risk if you suffer from liver disease or alcoholism, if you have decreased stomach acidity (due to gastric surgery or the use of antacids), or if you have a compromised immune system due to: steroid use; conditions such as AIDS, cancer, or diabetes; or treatments such as a chemotherapy.

Who’s at Risk, Risky Foods, and Cause of Illness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foodborne illness is preventable if you take the right precautions</th>
<th>RISKY FOODS (This is a partial listing)</th>
<th>WHO IS AT RISK</th>
<th>CAUSE OF ILLNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raw or Undercooked eggs: Caesar salad dressing; soft-cooked eggs; Monte Cristo sandwich; meringue pie; some puddings and custards; mousse; sauces made with raw eggs (e.g., Hollandaise)</td>
<td>Everyone, especially Older Adults Young Children Immune-Compromised</td>
<td>Salmonella enteritidis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw dairy products: Raw or unpasteurized milk; some soft cheeses like... Camembert, Brie</td>
<td>Everyone, especially Pregnant Women Older Adults Immune-compromised Young Children</td>
<td>Listeria monocytogenes Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli Campylobacter Campylobacter Salmonella</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw or rare meat: Hamburger, carpaccio</td>
<td>Everyone, especially Older Adults Young Children</td>
<td>Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli Salmonella</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw or undercooked molluscan shellfish: Raw clams or oysters on the half shell</td>
<td>Everyone, especially Persons with liver disease or alcoholism Immune-compromised</td>
<td>Vibrio vulnificus Other vibrios Hepatitis A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw fish: Sushi, ceviche, tuna carpaccio</td>
<td>Everyone, especially Immune-compromised Older Adults</td>
<td>Parasites Vibrio parahaemolyticus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To reduce your chances of foodborne illness you should stay away from:

- Raw fish or shellfish – oysters, clams, sushi, sashimi, ceviche
- Meat or seafood ordered undercooked and food with uncooked egg ingredients – such as “runny” fried or poached eggs; dressings or sauces such as hollandaise, homemade mayonnaise, and Caesar salad dressing; desserts like chocolate mousse, meringue pie and tiramisu.

2 Ask About Preparation Recipes vary. If you’re not sure whether a ready-to-eat item contains undercooked ingredients, ask how the food is prepared.

3 Request that Food be Thoroughly Cooked If the item you are interested in selecting contains raw or undercooked meat, fish, shellfish, or eggs, ask if that ingredient can be eliminated. If the food is prepared to order, ask for it thoroughly cooked.

4 Make a Different Choice With certain foods, such as oysters on the half shell or an egg-based mousse, it may be impossible to accommodate your request for thorough cooking. In that case, simply choose something else. It is a minor inconvenience compared to the major problems caused by foodborne illness.

To learn more about foodborne illness and ways to prevent it, talk to your health care professional.

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