

# How to Avoid Cross-Contamination

**Cross-contamination** describes how bacteria can spread from one food product to another. Raw food, particularly meats, poultry and fish, are often contaminated with microorganisms. If ready-to-eat food comes in contact with raw food or the juice from raw food, it can become contaminated with disease-causing microorganisms. Many cases of foodborne illness are caused when ready-to-eat food is accidentally contaminated by using the same utensil which was used to prepare raw meat. Cutting boards, plates and utensils all must be washed and sanitized immediately before use with ready-to-eat food.



- Avoid placing cooked food back on the plate that held raw food, unless it is washed and sanitized first.
- Store raw meat and poultry below ready-to-eat food to avoid contamination from dripping juices.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw and ready-to-eat food, or wash and sanitize cutting boards between tasks.
- Thoroughly wash your hands each time you work with different food types.