



**Myth: Stomach flu and flu are the same thing.**

**Fact:** Gastrointestinal (GI) illness, often incorrectly referred to as the stomach flu, can be caused by viruses, bacteria, parasites, toxins or allergies. Symptoms of GI illness are typically nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Flu refers to influenza, which is a respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. Symptoms of the flu are typically fever, cough, respiratory congestion and sore throat.

**Myth: Food poisoning means that I got ill from eating bacteria that was in my food.**

**Fact:** Food poisoning (although the correct term is food intoxication) is a gastrointestinal illness caused by eating foods contaminated with toxins produced by certain bacteria. Although your food may contain bacteria, it is not the bacteria making you ill, it is the toxin they are producing. As the bacteria multiplies in your food, it produces toxins that can cause illness. That's why it's very important to follow proper cooking, storage, refrigeration and reheating guidelines in order to prepare and serve safe food. For guidance on preparing safe food, visit [www.fightbac.org/content/view/6/11](http://www.fightbac.org/content/view/6/11).

**Myth: I became ill from the last thing I ate.**

**Fact:** While this sometimes may be true, your illness usually is not associated with the last foods you ate. Before it can make you sick, the virus, bacteria or parasite must have time to start multiplying. Some bacteria can take two to five days or more before symptoms begin to show, while parasitic infections can take three to 25 days. Viruses may take only one to two days before symptoms appear.

**Myth: If I wear gloves to prepare food, I don't have to wash my hands.**

**Fact:** The reason you should wash your hands after wearing gloves is that gloves become ripped or torn, during use (sometimes without your knowledge) allowing bacteria to enter beneath the glove material and multiply rapidly. You also have to use your clean hands to remove the soiled gloves, contaminating your hands.

**Myth: If my grandparents/parents used to do something a certain way, it must be safe.**

**Fact:** This is a common misperception. The food supply has become global, with many different countries supplying food products to the United States. Also, an increasing amount of food prepared away from the home is taken home for consumption, creating new opportunities for mishandling. While inspections of our food supply do occur, bacteria, viruses and parasites are often difficult to detect. This is why it is so important to wash all fruits and vegetables before eating them and to cook your food at proper temperatures.

**Myth: I always follow the right cooking temperatures, so I know it wasn't my food that made me sick.**

**Fact:** What often happens is cross contamination, which spreads bacteria. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods. Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

