

# BEEF SAFETY

## Back to basics: 4 Easy Steps

Bacteria are found everywhere—in soil, plants, animals and even in the human body. While most bacteria are harmless, some can cause foodborne illness. Retailers and consumers can minimize the risk of foodborne illness by practicing safe food handling and storage.

In every step of food preparation, follow these guidelines to keep beef safe.

### CLEAN

Wash hands and surfaces often. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling ground beef to make sure you don't spread bacteria. Use soap and hot water to wash utensils and surfaces which have come into contact with the raw meat.

### SEPERATE

Don't cross-contaminate. Even after you've cleaned your hands and surfaces thoroughly, raw ground meat can still spread illness-causing bacteria to ready-to-eat foods—unless you keep them separate. Bacteria in raw meat juices can contaminate foods that have been cooked safely or raw foods that won't be cooked, such as salad ingredients. Bacteria also can be present on equipment, hands, and even in the air.

To avoid cross-contamination, keep everything clean. Don't reuse any packaging materials. Don't put cooked hamburgers on the same platter that held the raw patties unless you wash the platter again.

### COOK

Cook to the right temperature. Did you know that the bacteria that cause food poisoning multiply quickest in the "Danger Zone," the temperatures between 40 and 140 °F (4.4 and 60 °C)? To destroy harmful bacteria, cook ground beef to a safe minimum internal temperature of 160 °F (71.1 °C) as measured with a food thermometer.

### CHILL

Refrigerate promptly. Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within 2 hours unless you refrigerate.