Food safety hazards

Many who cook at home likely do one or more of these things for convenience or because of commonly believed myths. But these kitchen practices could increase your risk of food poisoning.

Preparing a meal? Watch out for germs.

1. Do we need to use separate chopping boards for cooked and raw food and shouldn’t we clean the board?

Chopping boards can be washed with soap and water after use. However, they should be cleaned before being used to chop raw and cooked foods, especially meat and fish. Scrubbing them with a clean brush and a stiff brush may help remove any blood, fats, or other food debris.

2. Can we let food thaw in the sink?

Food should be stored in a refrigerator or defrosted at room temperature for an extended period of time. As soon as it has returned to room temperature for an extended period of time, let the defrosted food sit at room temperature, said Prof Chen.

3. Should we wash our hands before cooking?

It is not necessary. Washing meat splashes bacteria onto your hands, clothes, utensils and worktops, which can enter the temperature danger zone, said Prof Wong. The main point to note is to let the defrosted food or food at room temperature for an extended period of time. As soon as it has returned to room temperature, said Prof Wong. "The main point to note is to let the defrosted food or food at room temperature for an extended period of time. If you can do so, place the defrosted food or food at room temperature on a clean, dry and cool surface, and wash your hands with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds before preparing food.

4. Does reheating food in the microwave makes it safe to eat?

A mistake that people commonly make is to reheat food in the microwave, said Prof Wong. Not all food is heated throughout the microwave, and some parts of the food are not properly cooked, while other parts are overcooked. To ensure that the food is properly cooked, the food should be stirred in the microwave to help spread out the heat waves evenly, said Prof Wong.

5. Can we eat food that has fallen on the floor after rinsing it with water?

The truth is that no matter how fast you rinse the food, a bacteria will be left behind, said Prof Chen. It would depend how long it stays in the temperature danger zone, and the bacteria in the environment. Proper handling of vegetables and fruits means first rinsing them thoroughly to remove dirt, bacteria and chemical residues, according to Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (NAFAS) guidelines. The vegetables should be soaked in fresh tap water for 15 minutes and then rinsed once more under running water before cutting or cooking. Special detergent or washing liquid is not required.

6. If beef is not eaten rare, why can we not prepare other types of meat for consumption directly?

The risk is significantly lower if meat is not eaten rare and then cooked, said Prof Chen.

7. Is it safe to eat leafy vegetables raw after washing them?

These bacteria or parasites stay in the outer leaves as more bacteria tend to accumulate on the outer layers, he said. Proper handling of vegetables and fruits means first rinsing them thoroughly to remove dirt, bacteria and chemical residues, according to Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority guidelines. The vegetables should be soaked in fresh tap water for 15 minutes and then rinsed once more under running water before cutting or cooking. Special detergent or washing liquid is not required.

8. What is the best way to handle eggs, especially if we want to eat them raw?

It is not wise to consume eggs or food that contains raw eggs like mayonnaise. The risk of bacteria contamination is to discard the egg, said Prof Chen.

9. Can we eat eggs that have dropped on the floor even after rinsing them with water?

The risk is significantly lower if an egg is rinsed and then cooked, said Prof Chen.