The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans outline four basic food safety principles of **CLEAN, SEPARATE, COOK** and CHILL. They directly align with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and ConAgra Foods’ *Home Food Safety* program’s four simple tips to reduce the risk of foodborne illness:

1) Wash hands often.
2) Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate.
3) Cook to proper temperatures.
4) Refrigerate promptly to 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

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**1) CLEAN – Wash Hands Often**

The Academy and ConAgra Foods’ *Home Food Safety* program stresses the importance of proper hand washing to eliminate cases of foodborne illness and significantly reduce the spread of the common cold and flu. Similarly, the Dietary Guidelines recommend:

- Wet hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available. Rub hands together to make a lather, scrubbing all parts of the hands for 20 seconds.
- Rinse hands thoroughly under running water.
- Dry hands using a clean paper towel. If possible, use a paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Coupled with the importance of hand washing, the Dietary Guidelines reminds consumers to thoroughly wash all kitchen surfaces, including appliances, reusable grocery bags, and all produce (even if you plan to peel and cut before eating). For example, the insides of microwaves often become soiled with food, allowing bacteria to grow. By washing both the inside and outside, including handles and buttons, foodborne illness may be prevented.

**2) SEPARATE – Keep Raw Meats and Ready-to-Eat Foods Separate**

When juices from raw meats or germs from unclean objects accidentally touch cooked or ready-to-eat foods such as fruits or salads, cross-contamination occurs. Remember to use separate and clean cutting boards for raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood and a separate one for ready-to-eat foods.

The Dietary Guidelines reiterate the importance of keeping foods separate before you prepare them, too:

- Place raw fish, seafood, meat and poultry in plastic bags. Separate them from other foods in your grocery cart and bags.
- Store raw fish, seafood, meat and poultry on a shelf below ready-to-eat foods in your refrigerator.
- Clean reusable grocery bags regularly. Wash canvas and cloth bags in the washing machine and wash plastic reusable bags with hot, soapy water.
3 **COOK – Cook to Proper Temperatures**

Fish, seafood, meat, poultry and egg dishes should be cooked to the recommended safe minimum internal temperature to destroy any potentially harmful bacteria. Use a food thermometer to ensure food is safely cooked and any cooked food is kept at safe temperatures until eaten.

**The Dietary Guidelines stress:**

- In general, the food thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food, not touching bone, fat or gristle.
- Follow the instructions on the label for the amount of time needed to measure the temperature of foods.
- The manufacturer’s instructions on the thermometer should be followed for the amount of time needed to measure the temperature of foods.
- Food thermometers should be cleaned with hot, soapy water before and after each use.
- Temperature rules apply to microwave cooking, too. Microwave ovens can cook unevenly and leave “cold spots” where harmful bacteria can survive. According to the *Guidelines*, “When cooking using a microwave, foods should be stirred, rotated, and/or flipped periodically to help them cook evenly. Microwave cooking instructions on food packages should always be followed.”
- A list of safe minimum internal temperatures for different foods can be found at www.homefoodsafety.org.
- Keep hot foods at 140°F or above.

4 **CHILL – Refrigerate Promptly to 40 Degrees Fahrenheit or Below**

The Home Food Safety program reminds consumers to refrigerate foods promptly and at a proper temperature to slow the growth of bacteria and prevent foodborne illness.

**The Dietary Guidelines continue the message by reminding us:**

- Hold cold foods at 40°F or below.
- Foods are no longer safe to eat when they have been in the danger zone of 40 to 140°F for more than two hours (one hour if the temperature is above 90°F). When shopping, the two-hour window includes the amount of time food is in the grocery basket, car, and on the kitchen counter.
- As soon as frozen food begins to thaw and become warmer than 40°F, any bacteria present before freezing can begin to multiply. Use one of the three safe ways to thaw foods: (1) in the refrigerator, (2) in cold water (such as in a leak proof bag, changing cold water every 30 minutes), or (3) in the microwave. Never thaw food on the counter.
- Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below. Keep your freezer at 0°F or below. Monitor these temperatures with appliance thermometers.