Food Hygiene Without Fear

1. A calm, practical starting point

Food safety is about a few useful habits, not achieving a perfectly germ-free kitchen. You can keep food safer with clear steps, visual reminders and routines that work for your senses and energy.

Before preparing food

Wash your hands with soap and running water for around 20 seconds, especially after using the toilet, handling raw meat or touching bins. Dry with a clean towel or paper towel.

Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods apart

Use separate boards and utensils, or wash them thoroughly with hot soapy water between tasks. Keep raw meat and its juices away from food that will not be cooked.

Clean what matters

Wash worktops, knives and boards after preparing raw foods. Ordinary cleaning with detergent is often enough; follow product instructions when disinfection is needed.

A manageable three-step routine

1 Wash hands at the right moments

2 Separate raw foods from ready-to-eat foods

3 Clean used surfaces and equipment

You do not need to restart a task because it feels imperfect.

Storage, Cooking & Leftovers

2. Clear decisions instead of guesswork

Fridge basics

Keep your fridge at 5 C or below. Store raw meat in a sealed container on the bottom shelf. Follow use-by dates, including when food looks or smells normal.

Cooking safely

Cook food thoroughly. For chicken and other poultry, a food thermometer can help: 75 C at the centre is a useful UK safety target. Follow packaging instructions for other foods.

Leftovers without uncertainty

Cool cooked food promptly and refrigerate within two hours. Eat refrigerated leftovers within 48 hours or freeze them. Reheat until steaming hot throughout, and only reheat once.

Use-by and best-before are different

USE-BY relates to safety: do not eat after the date. BEST-BEFORE relates mainly to quality: food may still be suitable after the date if stored correctly and there are no signs of spoilage.

When unsure

Check the label, storage instructions or a reliable food-safety source once. If you cannot establish that a high-risk food is safe, discard it. Repeated checking is not needed after a clear decision.

Build Your Own Kitchen Routine

3. Support independence without pressure

My simple food-preparation plan

Before I start

Choose a clear surface, gather ingredients and wash hands.

While preparing

Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate; use a timer if helpful.

After cooking

Put perishable food away promptly and clean used equipment.

When I feel overwhelmed

Pause safely, use a short checklist or ask for practical support.

Try a quick decision

You used a board for raw chicken and want to cut salad vegetables. What next? Wash the board and knife thoroughly with hot soapy water, or use clean separate equipment. Then continue. No need to clean the entire kitchen.

Sensory-friendly adaptations

Try unscented washing-up liquid, comfortable gloves, a visual timer, labelled containers or a written three-step checklist. Adapt the process without skipping essential safety steps.