

NUTRITION NUGGET #17

Can I use bleach to clean my food?

Answer: Do not wash food with bleach, even if diluted. Small amounts of chlorine may be left behind can be harmful to your health.



Facts:

- The FDA recommends washing fresh fruit and vegetables with cold running tap water.
- Using a vegetable brush and cold water removes 85% of the bacteria on the peel of fruits and vegetables.
- Fruits and vegetables that will be peeled should still be washed and scrubbed (i.e. bananas, mango, melon, etc)
- Bleach is safe to use on **surfaces** where food is prepared, but the proper dilution must be used: 1 tablespoon of bleach for every gallon of water. Note: this solution only has sanitizing power for up to *1 week*. Prepare only as much solution as you will use in that time.
- Chlorine bleach is often used to wash fresh produce in major food industry sites; however, this process is tightly regulated. Consumers should not follow this practice and should thoroughly wash fresh produce and meats right before they are ready to be eaten or prepared.

Apply: A participant tells you she have been cleaning their food with bleach for years and they are fine. What can you say to tell her safe ways to wash their produce?

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References: <http://www.foodsafetysite.com/educators/competencies/consumers/produce/produce2.html>; <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/clean/index.html>; <http://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/files/26437.pdf>; <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14540742>; Images: <http://chickensintheroad.com/barn/handling-milk/>. Accessed on: 12-17-13