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Berries and Small Fruits: Safe Handling Practices for Consumers¹

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Small fruits and berries include table grapes, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and kiwi fruit. These fruits are very tender and delicate. Most of these fruits are often packaged in the field without washing. Since the fruits are grown in a natural environment, they may be contaminated with harmful bacteria. Here are steps that you can take to reduce your risk of foodborne illness from these delicious fruit.



Where You Shop:

- Only buy small fruits and berries that are intact. Do **not** buy fruit with mold or other signs of damage.
- Avoid buying fruit that have an obvious infection.
- Buy only small amounts of berries or small fruits.
- Never taste unwashed berries or small fruits in stores.

At Home:

- Always wash small fruits or berries before eating.
- Refrigerate fresh berries and small fruits promptly.
- Allow small fruits such as kiwi to ripen at room temperature. Once ripe, they should be eaten or stored in the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate berries and small fruits within two hours of peeling or cutting.
- Discard leftover prepared berries or small fruits after two hours at room temperature.

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During Preparation

- Wash hands with hot, soapy water before and after:
 - handling fresh produce
 - handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood
 - using the bathroom
 - changing diapers
 - handling pets
- Rise small fruits and berries with cool tap water just before preparing or eating. **Don't** use soap or detergents.
- Remove leafy stems to reduce hiding places for bacteria.
- Wash only enough berries or small fruits for immediate use or consumption.
- Cut away bruised or damaged areas before preparing or eating.
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops often. Use hot soapy water and rinse well. **Sanitize** them after contact with fresh produce, raw meat, poultry, or seafood (see box).

To sanitize cutting boards, dishes, and utensils:

- Mix one teaspoon of chlorine bleach into one quart of water.
- Pour mixture onto the surfaces or submerge small items into the solution and let sit at least one minute.
- Rinse well with hot running water.

- Counter tops can be sanitized by using the above solution mix, sanitizing sprays or wipes after they are washed with soap and water for an additional safety measure.
- Sanitize kitchen sink frequently to reduce build up of microbes.
- **Do not** cross contaminate. Use clean cutting boards and utensils for fresh produce.
- If you can, use a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry, and seafood.
- **Do not** consume ice that has come into contact with fresh produce or other raw products.
- Use a cooler with ice or ice gel packs when you take perishable foods outdoors. This includes fresh cut fruits and vegetables.

Following these steps will help reduce your risk of foodborne illness from fresh produce.

For more information, visit the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) website at:
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov>
 or call FDA Consumer Inquiries at
 1-888-SAFEFOOD (a toll-free number).