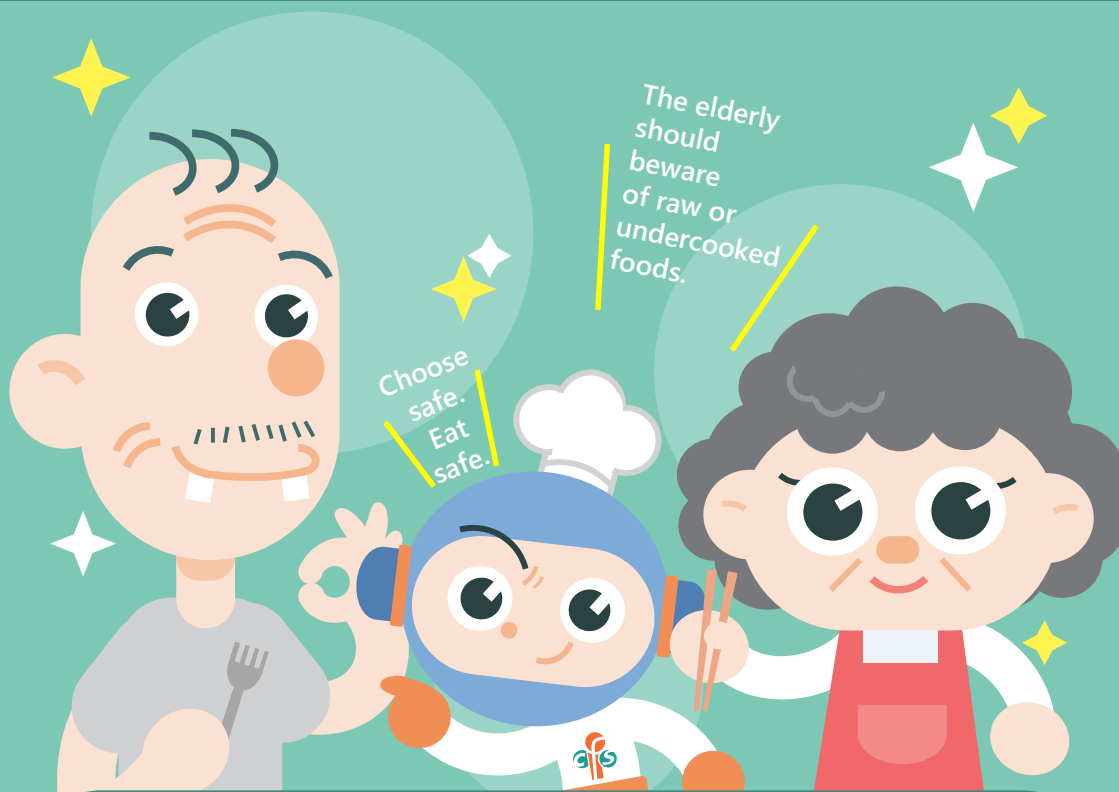


Know Your High-risk Foods

A series on high-risk foods



Food Safety Advice for the Elderly

Anyone can get foodborne illnesses, also known as **food poisoning**. However, some people such as older people are more likely to get these illnesses, as when we get older, our immune systems and natural defences are weakened. Some may have their immune systems further weakened if they suffer from certain chronic diseases, such as diabetes, as a result of the disease or its therapy. Older people should choose and prepare food carefully to help prevent food poisoning.

Raw or Undercooked Foods are High-risk Foods

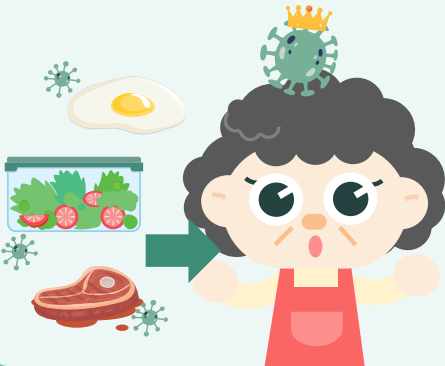
Food Poisoning

Raw or undercooked foods are high-risk foods, as there is no or inadequate heat treatment to eliminate the microorganisms present, such as bacteria, viruses and parasites, that can pose risks to health. Common symptoms of food poisoning caused by eating food contaminated by microorganisms include vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fever. Should older people contract food poisoning, they are more likely to have a lengthier illness, undergo hospitalisation or even die.



Superbugs

Raw or undercooked foods are also associated with the risk of 'superbugs'. They are microorganisms that have developed antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to stop a wide range of antimicrobial agents, antibiotics for example, from working against them. AMR is a serious public health threat. While cooking can kill 'superbugs', raw or undercooked foods are more likely to carry microorganisms including 'superbugs' that can be transferred to humans through food intake. Whether or not 'superbugs' can cause illnesses, they may transfer their antibiotic resistance genes to other bacteria inside the human body, therefore affecting the effectiveness of future use of antibiotics when needed.



Avoid Raw or Undercooked Foods and Choose Safer Alternatives

Let's learn about the foods to avoid and safer alternatives for older people:

Foods to Avoid

Safer Alternatives



Seafood

Fish served raw/ undercooked

(e.g. sushi, sashimi, smoked salmon)



Thoroughly cooked fish; smoked fish and precooked fish reheated thoroughly; canned fish

All other raw/ undercooked seafood

(e.g. oysters, scallops, shrimps, cuttlefish)



Thoroughly cooked seafood; smoked seafood and precooked seafood reheated thoroughly; canned seafood



Eggs

Eggs served raw or undercooked

(unhardened whites and yolks, e.g. sunny-side-up eggs, scrambled eggs)



Fully cooked eggs

Salad and sandwich dressings or desserts made with raw eggs

(e.g. Caesar dressing, mayonnaise, puddings)



Salad and sandwich dressings or desserts containing no raw eggs or made with pasteurised eggs

Meat

Raw/ undercooked meat and offal

(e.g. congees served with undercooked minced beef/pork liver, partially cooked steak)



Thoroughly
cooked meat
and offal

Cold meat and meat products

(e.g. ham, sausages,
pate)



Cold meat and
meat products
reheated
thoroughly

Dairy products

Soft cheeses

(e.g. Feta, Brie,
Camembert)

and blue cheeses

(e.g. Danish blue,
Gorgonzola and Roquefort)

made from raw milk



Cheeses
made from
pasteurised
milk

Vegetables

Ready-to-eat raw vegetables

(e.g. prepackaged
salad vegetables, seed
sprouts, raw greens in
sandwiches)



Thoroughly
washed and
cooked fresh
vegetables

Other Foods to be Careful with

Besides raw or undercooked foods, older people should also be careful with foods that are sticky or difficult to chew and swallow such as Lunar New Year puddings, glutinous rice balls and konjac jellies so as to prevent choking.

5 Keys to Preventing Food Poisoning

Older people should always follow the 5 keys below to reduce the risk of food poisoning:



1
Choose
Choose fresh and wholesome materials



2
Clean
Keep hands and utensils clean



3
Separate
Separate raw and cooked foods



5
Safe Temperature
Keep food at a safe temperature



4
Cook
Cook thoroughly

When Eating Out

- Order food that is properly cooked. If in doubt, ask your server about the ingredients of the dishes and how they are cooked.
- If a restaurant serves you undercooked food, send it back to be thoroughly cooked until it is safe to eat.
- Handle your leftovers quickly. Refrigerate them within 2 hours of eating out. When reheating leftovers, make sure the core temperature of food reaches at least 75°C before eating.

