

SPROUTS



Are these tiny vegetables tasty treats or carriers of foodborne illness?

Sprout Tips

To reduce your food safety risk, avoid sprouts entirely, or at least follow these tips...

- Only purchase sprouts that are **refrigerated**. They should look fresh and green. Avoid sprouts that look slimy or which are sitting in water.
- Be aware that **children, older adults, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems** should avoid eating raw sprouts of any kind.
- Remember that **cooking sprouts thoroughly** kills most harmful bacteria.
- Know that **homegrown sprouts aren't necessarily safer**. The harmful bacteria may be present on or in the seed.

Sprouts Aren't Always Safe

Sprouts seem like foods that are super healthful in our culture. They could be alfalfa sprouts on a sandwich, mung bean sprouts in a stir-fry, or radish sprouts on a salad. While sprouts do contain protein and vitamins, they may also contain something we don't want: pathogens that cause foodborne illnesses. Think about it. **Sprouts grow in warm and wet places. So does bacteria.**

According to the Food and Drug Administration, in the last several months there have been at least two outbreaks of foodborne illness in the United States that were related to sprouts. In one outbreak, five people were hospitalized and two of them died. Then, in another outbreak, a total of 115 people got sick. These aren't the only examples. Over the past 20 years, **sprouted seeds have been associated with at least 55 foodborne illness outbreaks**, with more than 15,000 people getting sick. All of this came from eating something that those people thought was good for them.

