

NUTRIGRAM

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Spring Cleaning 101



Spring is just around the corner, which means flowers, warmer weather and of course spring cleaning.

"Spring cleaning is a great reminder to give your kitchen a good cleaning and food safety check," says Sonya Angelone, MS, RDN, CLT, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Kitchen Surfaces

"Illness-causing bacteria can be found lurking in many places in your kitchen," Angelone says. "It is important to wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and other surfaces the right way, to avoid unintentionally spreading bacteria to food."

- Keep countertops clean by washing with hot soapy water before and after preparing food. Clean surfaces and utensils with a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water.
- Keep kitchen surfaces — such as appliances, countertops, cutting boards and utensils — clean with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item. Keeping cutting boards and surfaces clean, and following proper sponge safety, helps prevent cross-contamination.

Refrigerator

"Be sure to check the refrigerator and freezer and clean the shelving and drawers where bacteria can hide" says Angelone. "Bacteria that cause food borne illness aren't always visible so be sure all surfaces including small crevices are cleaned well."

- Check that the refrigerator temperature is set to below 40°F.
- Keep the refrigerator clean at all times; this is a good time to look for unnoticed spills and remove lingering odors. Wipe up spills and clean surfaces with hot, soapy water and rinse well. Be sure to clean under drawers and edges of glass shelves.
- To keep the refrigerator smelling fresh and help eliminate odors, place an opened box of baking soda on a shelf. Avoid using solvent cleaning agents, abrasives and any cleansers that may impart a chemical taste to food or ice cubes, or cause damage to the interior finish of your refrigerator. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Shelf life

"Make sure foods haven't spoiled whether in the pantry or in the refrigerator," says Angelone.

- This is a good time of year to use or throw away foods that are losing their quality or have spoiled for both refrigerated and non-refrigerated items in the pantry. For a detailed listing of the shelf-life of foods, download the free **"Food Keeper?" app**.
- Make spring the time to begin new food safety habits. To minimize food waste, check the refrigerator regularly to be sure foods are consumed before they spoil. Once a week, make it a habit to throw out perishable foods that should no longer be eaten.

*Reviewed by Taylor Wolfram, MS, RDN, LDN
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