

WHICH MEATS CAN BE EATEN RARE?

Beef steaks, whole joints of beef, lamb chops, whole joints of lamb.

- These can be eaten 'rare' in the middle because harmful bacteria can only be on the outside
- Vulnerable people, including elderly people, babies and toddlers, pregnant women and people who are unwell, should avoid eating lamb or beef that is "rare" or pink

How should I cook these meats?

- When you are cooking steaks, or whole joints of beef or lamb, pink or 'rare', use a high temperature to seal the meat and kill any bacteria that might be on the outside
- You can tell a piece of meat has been properly sealed because all the outside will have changed colour

WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY LEFTOVERS OR EXTRAS?

- For extra uncooked meat follow any storage instructions on the label and don't eat meat after its 'use by' date
- When you have cooked meat and you're not going to eat it straight away, cool it as quickly as possible and then put it in the fridge or freezer
- Leftovers should be refrigerated within two hours of cooking and eaten within three days
- Remember never reheat foods more than once

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD DO WHEN HANDLING MEAT?

- Make sure to wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling raw meat. This prevents the spread of bacteria
- Use separate utensils for raw or partially cooked meat and cooked meat



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COOKING MEAT SAFELY

You've probably been hearing a lot about cooking meats like burgers and sausages until piping hot all the way through. That's because these meats can contain bacteria throughout. But it's not just these meats that need careful handling. All raw meats can carry harmful bacteria on the outside, so cooking all meat properly is important to kill the bacteria that can cause food poisoning.

This leaflet tells you how to handle and cook meat, and how to check that your meat is fully cooked and safe to eat.



WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR WHEN BUYING MEAT?

- Always buy your meat from a reputable butcher or shop. If you're buying pre-packed meat, check the label to see the 'use by' date
- Make sure raw meats are packed in bags separate from 'ready to eat' foods such as cooked hams and cheeses
- Try to go for the leanest option whenever you can. As a general rule, the more white you can see on red meat, the more fat it contains
- Try not to eat too many processed meat products such as sausages, bacon, burgers and salami, because these are generally high in fat and salt

And when I get home?

- Put meats into the fridge as quickly as possible when you get home from shopping
- Store raw meat/poultry in clean sealed containers on the bottom shelf of the fridge, so it can't touch or drip onto other food
- Keep cooked meat separate from raw meat
- Follow any storage instructions on the label and don't eat meat after its 'use by' date

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT FREEZING AND DEFROSTING?

It's OK to freeze raw meat if it has not been previously frozen, so long as you follow these steps:

- Freeze it before the 'use by' date
- Check the label for any specific freezing or thawing instructions
- Defrost meat by thawing it on the bottom shelf of the fridge on a plate away from other foods. When meat thaws, lots of liquid can come out, which can spread bacteria to any food, plates or surfaces that it touches. Keep the meat covered so that it can't touch or drip onto other foods
- Only defrost meat in the microwave if you're going to cook and eat it straight away. The manufacturer's instructions should be followed
- Try to cook the raw meat within 24 hours of defrosting
- As a rule of thumb, allow 24 hours to defrost each 2.5kg/5lbs of meat or chicken
- If you defrost raw meat and then cook it thoroughly, you can freeze it again, but remember never to reheat foods more than once

WHICH MEATS MUST BE COOKED ALL THE WAY THROUGH?

Poultry, pork, rolled joints, burgers, sausages, chicken nuggets, kebabs, kidneys, liver and other types of offal, and any meat or fish that has been minced or skewered. The reason is that with *whole* cuts of meat, any harmful bacteria will live on the outside only. But if meat has been minced or chopped up, the bacteria get moved around.

How should I cook these meats?

- Select a temperature that is hot enough to cook the meat but not so hot that the outside will burn before the inside has had a chance to cook
- If you are cooking a number of small pieces of meat such as sausages, move them around and turn them regularly so that each piece cooks evenly
- Temperature and cooking times will vary depending on the type of cut of meat and the method of cooking. For example when roasting poultry, pork joints and rolled joints the following times and temperatures can be used as a guide. All meat should be checked visually to see if it is cooked thoroughly

Meat (roasting)	Time and weight	Temperature
Whole Chicken	20 mins per 450g / lb plus 20 extra mins	180°C / 350°F / Gas 4 or 5
Pork joint	35 mins per 450g / lb plus 35 extra mins	180°C / 350°F / Gas 4 or 5
Rolled joint (any meat)	35 mins per 450g / lb plus 35 extra mins	180°C / 350°F / Gas 4 or 5

How do I check these meats are properly cooked?

- When you pierce the thickest part of the meat with a fork or skewer, the **juices should run clear**. For a whole chicken or other bird, the thickest part is the leg between the drumstick and the breast
- Cut the meat open with a clean knife to check it is **piping hot all the way through** – it should be steaming
- Meat changes colour when it is cooked. Make sure there is **no pink meat left**
- If you're cooking a very large dish, such as a lasagne, check it in a few places, because some parts of the dish may be less hot than others