

## FOOD SAFETY

### Don't let ground turkey make you sick

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More than half of the raw ground turkey and patty products we recently analyzed contained fecal bacteria, and 90 percent had at least one of the five bacteria that we looked for, including some notorious for causing foodborne illness, like salmonella and staphylococcus aureus. And almost all of the disease-causing bugs were resistant to one or more of the antibiotics commonly used to fight them. So if you get sick you might have to try several antibiotics to find one that helps. A better strategy: Take steps to avoid getting sick from ground turkey in the first place. Here's how.

1. Cook ground turkey thoroughly. The bacteria our tests found are killed by thorough cooking. So make sure to cook ground turkey to at least 165° F (check with a meat thermometer) to kill potentially harmful bacteria. See our Ratings of meat thermometers. But remember that proper cooking isn't enough, since some can produce toxins that may not be destroyed by heat.
2. Buy turkey labeled "organic" or "no antibiotics." Our tests found that they tended to have bacteria resistant to fewer drugs than bacteria on conventional turkey. Look especially for those labeled "USDA Process Verified," which means that the Department of Agriculture has confirmed that the producer is doing what it says. Read other labels, too. For example, "animal welfare approved" and "Certified Humane®" mean that antibiotics were restricted to sick animals. And don't be fooled by meat labeled "natural." That meat is simply minimally processed, with no artificial ingredients or added color. It can come from an animal that ate antibiotics daily.
3. Shop carefully. Buy meat just before checking out, and place it in a plastic bag to prevent leaks.
4. Store properly. If cooking meat within a couple of days, store it at 40° F or below. Otherwise, freeze it. (Note that freezing may not kill bacteria.)
5. Clean up thoroughly. Wash hands and all surfaces after handling ground turkey. Don't return cooked meat to the plate that held it raw. And refrigerate or freeze any leftovers within two hours of cooking.

—Doug Podolsky

Source: <http://news.consumerreports.org/health/2013/05/dont-let-ground-turkey-make-you-sick.html>