Safe Handling of Fresh Produce

Do you consume fresh fruits and vegetables daily? They can be very nutritious and contain a lot of flavor. However, recent data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention attribute 46% of foodborne illnesses to produce. Produce also accounts for 38% of the hospitalizations reviewed in this study. The study considered fruits, nuts, and vegetables as produce. Of the illnesses reported, many were derived from eating leafy vegetables.

With this being said, what are you doing to ensure your produce is safe? Let’s look at a few ways you can help protect your family from contracting foodborne illnesses.

**Purchasing Safe Produce**
Purchase produce that is not bruised or damaged. When you select pre-cut produce, chose only items that are refrigerated and/or on ice. Be sure to separate the produce from the other items in your cart, such as meat or seafood products, as this could lead to cross contamination.

**Prepare Safe Produce**
Keep produce that will be eaten raw separate from other foods, such as raw meats or seafood. It is advised to remove damaged areas on the produce prior to cooking or eating. Wash all produce thoroughly under running water before handling. Even if you plan to peel the produce, it is still recommended that you wash it. Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush and dry with a clean cloth or paper towel.

Produce may become contaminated at any point in the food process. Eating contaminated produce could lead to foodborne illness. Remember, as you enjoy these healthy menu options, to keep food safety in mind!

For more information on food safety and fresh produce, contact your local county AgriLife Extension agent [insert contact information here], or visit this link [http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm114299](http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm114299).
