

Eating Poultry the Healthy "Weigh"

Most of us know that poultry is low in fat and saturated fat. We also know that turkey and chicken are versatile protein sources - easy to cook in a variety of tasty flavors. However, we don't always know how to choose, cook and store poultry properly. Here's how.

1. **BUYING** poultry at the store

When shopping, pick out poultry (and all other raw meats) just before you are ready to check out. Check the 'sell by' dates on packages carefully. Avoid packages that are leaking and put all meat packages into separate plastic bags (available in most meat cases).

2. **TRANSPORTING** poultry from store to home

Never leave poultry or other perishable foods in a hot car. In hot weather, carry a small cooler and freezable gel packs to keep food cold on your way home. Keep all poultry and other meats separate from other foods.

3. **STORING** poultry before cooking

Refrigerate raw chicken or turkey immediately. Never leave raw meats out on counters. Place packaged fresh poultry, in original wrapping, on lower shelves, in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Freeze any uncooked poultry that you will not use within two days.

4. **THAWING** frozen poultry properly

Never thaw poultry on a countertop. Thaw in the refrigerator - about 24 hours for a 4-pound chicken and 3 to 9 hours for cut-up parts. For quick thawing of raw or cooked poultry, use a microwave. Thawing time will vary depending on the size of the piece.

5. **COOKING** and **GRILLING** poultry safely

Always cook well done, not medium or rare. If using a meat thermometer, internal temperatures should reach 180°F for a whole chicken, 170°F for bone-in parts and 160°F for boneless parts. To check visually, pierce with a fork - juices should run clear - not pink.

6. **STORING** poultry after cooking

Never leave cooked poultry at room temperature for more than 2 hours. If not eaten right away, cooked poultry should be kept either hot or refrigerated. Cooked, cut-up poultry is at its best refrigerated for no more than 2 days - whole poultry for no more than 3 days.

