

# Raw Produce

## *Selecting and Serving it Safely*

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As you enjoy fresh produce from Virtua's Mobile Farmers Market, follow these safe handling tips from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to help protect yourself and your family.

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. However, harmful bacteria that may be in the soil or water where produce grows can come in contact with fruits and vegetables and contaminate them. Fresh produce may also become contaminated after it is harvested, such as during storage or preparation. Eating contaminated produce can lead to foodborne illness, so as you enjoy fresh produce, follow these safe handling tips to help protect you and your family:

- Store perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs, and mushrooms) in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40° F or below
- Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from raw meat, poultry, and seafood — and from kitchen utensils and cutting boards used for those products
- When preparing any fresh produce, begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after preparation
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating
- **Wash all produce thoroughly under running water before preparing and/or eating.** Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended
- Even if you do not plan to eat the skin, it is still important to wash produce first so dirt and bacteria are not transferred from the surface when peeling or cutting produce
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush
- After washing, dry produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to further reduce bacteria that may be present on the surface