

**Home Is Where the Disease Is**  
**Summary of Annual Meeting of American Society of Microbiology,**  
**Presentation of Gerba and colleagues, 1998**  
**by P. Anthony Chapdelaine, Jr., MD, MSPH**

According to these researchers, the majority of food-borne illness is contracted at home, not at restaurants. The kitchen is the area with the highest bacterial contaminant counts. Cutting boards and surfaces contacting raw meats (especially animal meat and poultry) are the most contaminated areas.

The homemaker's ordinary cleaning practices do not affect the bacterial counts!

Based on this research, I recommend the following methods to decrease your family's exposure to sometimes dangerous pathogens:

- Damp dish cloths and sponges carry the most bacteria. Use a clean dish cloth for drying dishes, and another for washing dishes and surfaces, every day and wash the old ones. Sponges should be put in the laundry several times a week.
- Cutting boards used to cut meat must be cleaned with a disinfectant immediately after use. (Use 2 cutting boards, one just for meats.)
- Clean countertops, sinks, faucets and refrigerator handles regularly with a disinfectant.
- Use a disinfectant such as chlorine bleach. The best, most environmentally friendly, and safest way to disinfect (the only method that is not toxic or poisonous to you or the environment) is a spray of vinegar followed by a spray of hydrogen peroxide (or vice versa). Vinegar and hydrogen peroxide sprayed on fruits and vegetables, and on countertops, cutting boards, etc., is actually the best disinfectant method, and costs very little compared to commercial kitchen disinfectants, yet works better at killing germs! Go to our article on natural disinfectants to learn more about this method.