

**A JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION SPECIAL REPORT; CHICKEN: HOW SAFE?;  
SECOND OF TWO PARTS; CHICKEN: AT WHAT COST?; Q & A; Readers ask:  
What are we supposed to do?'**

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## **Body**

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After last Sunday's publication of **Part** 1 of this project, many readers called reporter Scott Bronstein with further questions. Highlights of those - and Mr. Bronstein's responses:

Q: "We can't eat shellfish because of pollution. We can't eat beef, because it's high in cholesterol. And now we find **chicken**, which we've been living on, is no good. What are we supposed to do?" - Patty Rubin, east Cobb

A: Prepare poultry carefully. At a minimum, raw **chicken** should be stored so drippings from the package do not come into contact with other foods. After cutting or handling meat, thoroughly clean cutting board, knife, counter and hands with hot soapy water. Always cook **chicken** very thoroughly, ideally so that inside of meat reaches temperature of 170-180 degrees Fahrenheit.

Q: "Where do we go to buy clean **chicken**? I have a **chicken** I bought Saturday, and I can't even cook it. Were some companies cleaner than others?" - Pat Cannon, Smyrna

A: USDA inspectors interviewed at 37 processing plants, including the eight largest U.S. poultry processors, described the same problems and did not indicate that any company was any better or any worse than others.

Q: "It's an outrage. And I blame the federal government. Millions of people have been getting ill from **chickens**, and the government isn't doing anything about it. We deserve better." - Andre Maison, Snellville

A: Consumer advocates in Washington agree. They say consumers should demand a congressional investigation of poultry inspection. They say the government must create a standard for **how** much bacteria is unsafe, then must require that **chicken** be tested for microbiological pathogens before sale. They also say federal employees - not the companies - should do the inspections.

Q: "It's terrible the inspectors can't do their jobs. I have to say I'd much rather pay a higher price for the food I buy to be sure that I'm putting **safe** food on the table. Are turkeys **safer** than **chickens**?" - Sylvia Overcast, Atlanta

A: Consumer advocates say that turkey processing plants have similar inspection systems and have similar problems.

Q: "We all want to know if kosher **chicken** is any **safer**." - Betty Skoke, Atlanta

A: Consumer advocates say that kosher **chicken**, as well as free-range **chicken**, stands a good chance of being free of dangerous bacterial contamination.

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Q: "I was wondering, just how safe is beef and pork?" - Ken Rogers, Atlanta

A: USDA tests show that up to 10 percent of red meat tested is contaminated with salmonella bacteria, which can cause food poisoning, compared with up to 80 percent of chicken. Red meat is higher in cholesterol than chicken.

Q: "One inspector suggested we not buy "cut-up parts." But is the purchase of a whole chicken any safer?" - James J. Macie, Jonesboro

A: Industry studies show that cut-up parts are becoming increasingly popular with consumers, but in interviews 70 USDA inspectors said many of the cut-up parts come from "salvage" operations and may be diseased or unwholesome. Most inspectors who still eat chicken said they prefer to buy whole chickens.

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