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## Help

### Common Questions

#### Food Safety: Bacteria, Spoilage

- [What are spoilage bacteria?](#)
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#### What are spoilage bacteria?

*Spoilage bacteria* are microorganisms, too small to be seen without a microscope, that cause food to deteriorate and develop unpleasant odors, tastes, and textures. These one-celled microorganisms can cause fruits and vegetables to get mushy or slimy, or meat to develop a bad odor.

#### How do bacteria spoil food?

There are different spoilage bacteria and each reproduces at specific temperatures. Some can grow at the low temperatures in the refrigerator or freezer. Others grow well at room temperature and in the "Danger Zone." **Bacteria will grow anywhere they have access to nutrients and water.** Under the correct conditions, spoilage bacteria reproduce rapidly and the populations can grow very large. In some cases, they can double their numbers in as little as 20 minutes. The large number of microorganisms and their waste products cause the objectionable changes in odor, taste, and texture.

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