


Why is it important to use a cooking thermometer?



 One of the critical factors in fighting food-borne illness is temperature. Bacteria grow slowly at low temperatures and multiply rapidly at mid-range temperatures. To be safe, a product must be cooked to an internal temperature high enough to destroy harmful bacteria. Using a meat thermometer is a reliable way to ensure that food has reached the proper temperature. However, to be effective, thermometers must be used properly and calibrated correctly. If the thermometer is inserted incorrectly, or placed in the wrong area, the reading may not accurately reflect the internal temperature of the product. In general, the thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food, away from bone, fat or gristle. Read the manufacturer's instructions on how to calibrate (check the accuracy of) the thermometer. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, temperature is the only way to gauge whether food is sufficiently cooked. USDA research reveals that the "color test" can give consumers misleading information about the safety of the foods they are preparing, since cooked color varies considerably. For example, freezing and thawing may influence a meat's tendency to brown prematurely.

Source: Excerpted from [FDA Consumer, September - October 1998: All About Cooking Thermometers](#)