

■ Irradiated food is labeled

By law, food that has been irradiated must be marked with the special logo shown below, and labeled with the words “treated with radiation” or “treated by irradiation”. Irradiated spices do not need to be labeled if they are used as ingredients in other food products.



Treated by Irradiation



For more information on food safety and food irradiation,
please visit the MDH Web site at:

www.health.state.mn.us

Consumer Food Safety Education
Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit
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IRRADIATED FOOD

What it means for you
& your family



Consumer Food Safety Education
Nutrition and Physical Activity Unit

■ Irradiation provides important health benefits

Irradiation helps to keep our food safer, and also helps to prevent it from spoiling or spouting. It destroys some insects, fungi and bacteria that can make people ill. It also makes it possible to keep food longer and deliver it to the consumer in better condition.

Because irradiation does destroy many disease-causing organisms in food, people needing the safest food, such as patients receiving bone marrow transplants are given irradiated foods. American astronauts on missions have eaten irradiated food since 1972.

Irradiated foods are both wholesome and nutritious. Unlike cooking, irradiation does not change the fresh character of foods. And, the process has the same or less impact on the nutrition of foods than cooking, canning, freezing or simply storing.

■ Irradiation does not make food radioactive

When food is irradiated, energy passes through the food like light through a window. Irradiation destroys many-but not all-potentially harmful bacteria in food. The process doesn't make the food radioactive. The radiation levels used for food processing simply aren't high enough to contaminate food, and the food itself never touches the energy source.

■ Irradiation is safe and effective

There is no evidence of any health risks associated with food irradiation. The technology has been used for over 40 years. Worldwide, 37 countries have approved irradiation for processing food.

Hundreds of studies have been done on food irradiation. It has been studied more thoroughly than commonplace practices like cooking, canning or freezing.

It's been endorsed by a broad range of scientific groups and government agencies, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Public Health Service, the American Medical Association, the Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the American Dietetic Association, the Institute of Food Technologists and the World Health Organization. The U. S. Food and Drug Administration has approved its use on a wide variety of food products.

■ Irradiated food still needs to be handled safely

Irradiation isn't a "magic bullet". It's just one important tool for protecting food safety. Consumers still need to take care in handling their food. Remember to wash your hands, clean food preparation surfaces often, separate foods to avoid cross-contamination, cook foods to a safe temperature, and refrigerate and store food properly. Otherwise, potential disease-causing organisms can re-contaminate food, multiply and cause problems.

■ Irradiated products are used by consumers every day

Irradiation is used to sterilize medical products like syringes and surgical gloves. It's also used to destroy bacteria in cosmetics, sterilize wine corks and purify wool. It's used on some tampons and sanitary napkins, pacifiers, and contact lens solutions.

■ Irradiated foods are now available in the U.S.

Irradiated foods have been available in some American grocery stores for about 6 years. At least a dozen irradiated foods are now being sold-including ground beef, fruits and spices.