

Safe Handling of Fresh Parsley

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Parsley contains vitamins A and C. Like all fresh fruits and vegetables, parsley can provide vitamins, minerals and fiber to help keep your body healthy.

Occasionally, fresh produce can become contaminated with harmful bacteria or viruses, which are known as pathogens. Examples of pathogens include *Salmonella*, *E. coli* 0157:H7 and Hepatitis A. This contamination can occur at any point from the field to the table.

If you eat a contaminated fruit or vegetable, it could cause a foodborne illness. Common signs of foodborne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches and fever. These signs usually appear within 12 to 72 hours and can be serious.

However, safe handling of fresh parsley will help protect you and your family from foodborne illness.

Shopping

Shop often for fresh parsley and buy only what you will use within a few days. At the store, look for parsley that:

- Has a bright green color
- Has a fresh aroma

- Looks clean and fresh
- Avoid parsley that:
- Is poorly colored
 - Is moldy
 - Appears very dirty
 - Is dried out or has brown, damaged leaves

In the shopping cart and in the grocery bags, keep the parsley separate from household chemicals and from raw beef, poultry, fish and seafood. Place raw meats in plastic bags to keep the blood and juice from contaminating the parsley.

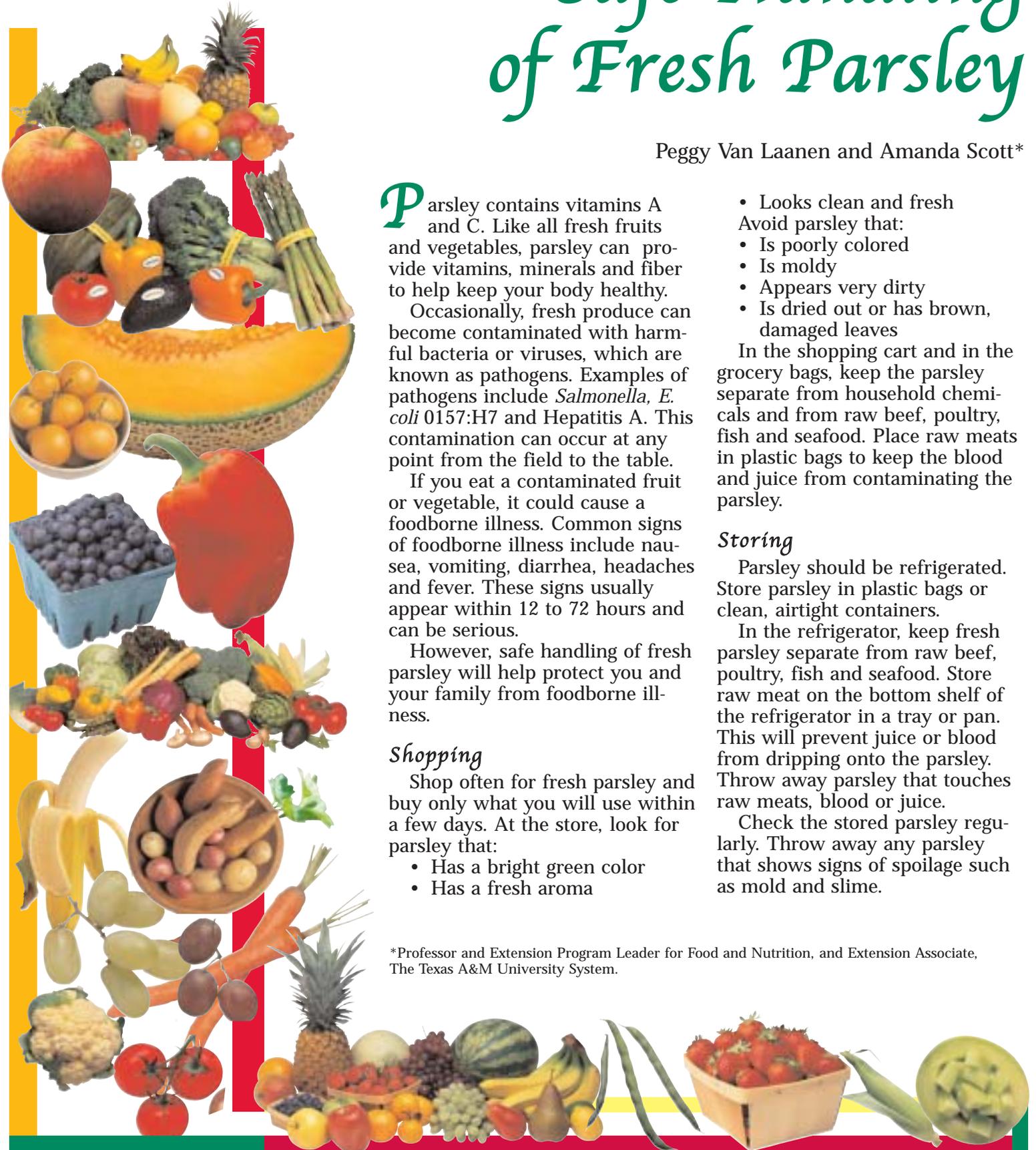
Storing

Parsley should be refrigerated. Store parsley in plastic bags or clean, airtight containers.

In the refrigerator, keep fresh parsley separate from raw beef, poultry, fish and seafood. Store raw meat on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator in a tray or pan. This will prevent juice or blood from dripping onto the parsley. Throw away parsley that touches raw meats, blood or juice.

Check the stored parsley regularly. Throw away any parsley that shows signs of spoilage such as mold and slime.

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Also, keep your refrigerator clean and cold (40 degrees F or below).

Washing and serving

Parsley should be washed even if it will be dried or used only as a garnish. To prevent spoilage and mold growth during storage, it is best to wash the parsley just before using it.

When you are ready to use the parsley, first wash your hands with hot, soapy water for 20 seconds. Wash your hands before and after handling food, and after touching raw meat, changing a diaper, using the restroom, handling a pet or touching anything that could contaminate your hands. Then dry your hands with a paper towel.

Also, wash and sanitize all food preparation areas and utensils with a solution of 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water.

To wash parsley, place it in a colander and remove any damaged stems or leaves. Use a

kitchen sink sprayer to wash all of it thoroughly in a clean sink under clean, running water. If a kitchen sink sprayer is not available, wash and agitate the parsley under slow running water.

Be sure to turn and gently shake the colander as the parsley is washed. You may also want to rub the parsley leaves with your hands to help remove the dirt and bacteria.

Do not use detergents, soaps or bleach to wash fresh parsley. These chemicals may change the flavor and could be poisonous.

When cutting or chopping parsley, use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and fresh parsley, or wash and sanitize them between foods. This will prevent any pathogens on the raw meat from being transferred to the parsley.

Refrigerate leftover cut parsley within 2 hours. If cut parsley is left unrefrigerated for more than 2 hours, throw it away.

Tri-State Fruit and Vegetable Safety Consortium
<http://fruitandvegetablesafety.tamu.edu>

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