

Homemade Play Dough

HOW TO MAKE IT SAFELY

Playing with play dough is a fun and creative activity for kids to engage in, and making your own play dough at home has plenty of benefits: It can be cheaper, it can be softer and smoother, and you can even get the kids involved in its making for even more fun. However, with the main ingredient of homemade play dough being flour, there is some safety risk involved. Flour can potentially be contaminated with pathogenic bacteria, such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*, which can cause serious foodborne illness. Because most homemade play dough recipes do not undergo a heat treatment, there is a risk of becoming ill from handling the dough. *(Note that some recipes call for first microwaving or baking the flour. While this process may kill some bacteria, it likely won't kill all, so some risk remains.)* To address the safety concerns with raw flour-based play dough, Iowa State University Extension has provided a recipe with a cooking step that kills potentially harmful pathogens.

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 ½ tsp cream of tartar
- 2 cups cold water

Mix all ingredients together and cook over medium heat for about 5 minutes stirring constantly. When finished, the dough will be the consistency of mashed potatoes. Divide it into 3-4 equal portions and add a few drops of food coloring to each. Knead the dough to distribute the color and smooth the dough. Store the play dough in freezer bags or air-tight containers. It will keep for a long time.

For Iowa State's original blog post, which also contains a recipe for **homemade sidewalk chalk**, see: <https://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/2015/04/06/make-your-own-sidewalk-chalk-and-play-dough/>

For further information on preserving visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) at <https://nchfp.uga.edu> or contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

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