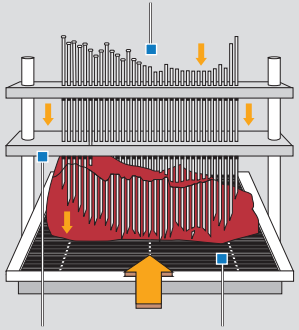
TENDERIZING MEAT: A POTENTIAL HAZARD

Mechanical tenderizers use blades or needles to help tenderize steaks and roasts. As much as 90 percent of those cuts are sold to hotels, family-style chain restaurants and institutions such as hospitals and group homes. The process exposes consumers to a higher risk of E. coli poisoning compared to meat that has not been mechanically tenderized.

THE PROCESS

Here is how a typical mechanical tenderizer works:

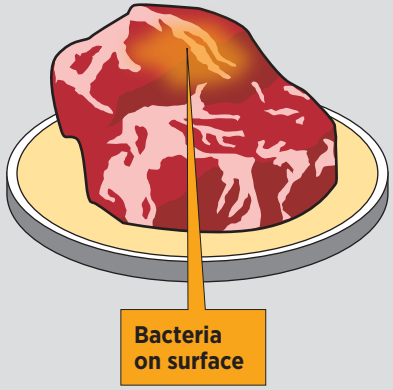
Dozens of needles or blades pierce the beef, and sometimes inject it with marinade.



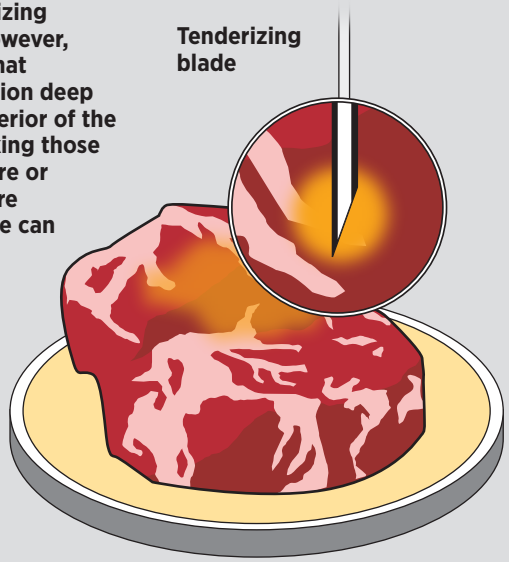
Plates press down on the cut while the blades penetrate.

Conveyor moves chunks of meat along the line.

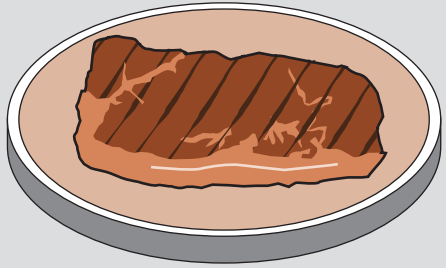
1 E. coli bacteria, a common pathogen carried by cow manure, can end up on the surface of the meat. But normal cooking destroys it.



2 **The tenderizing process, however, can force that contamination deep into the interior of the meat. Cooking those cuts to a rare or medium-rare temperature can allow the pathogens to survive.**



3 **A USDA study shows that some E. coli can survive in cold spots even when steaks appear to be fully cooked.**



Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture, food safety advocates and industry sources.

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