



The Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Newsletter

Winter 2005

A Note From: Evelyn F. Crayton, Assistant Director

Welcome to the first family and consumer sciences newsletter. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System has changed in the last two years. The state has been divided into nine family and consumer sciences regions to better serve the people of Alabama. There are four regional Extension agents assigned to a subject matter area, which include (1) Food Safety, Home Food Preservation and Preparation; (2) Human Nutrition, Diet and Health; (3) Family and Child Development; and (4) Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management. Additionally, there are urban Regional agents in the metropolitan areas.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Never before have we had so little time to do so much." Our families are facing challenges unlike any we have seen since World War II. These challenges include hurricanes, the war in Iraq, high unemployment, the rising cost of fuel, and inadequate healthcare. Our families need us!

Extension is assisting families and communities through continuing programs:

- **The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program celebrated its 40th year in August 2004.**
- **A Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program is available.**
- **Workshops are held on Estate Planning, Reality Check Programs, and High School Financial Planning.**
- **Trainings are held on Serve Sav and Home Food Preservation and Preparation.**
- **The 4th Annual Obesity and Diabetes Conference will be held April 5th-7th, 2006.**
- **A statewide physical activity program, Alabama in Motion, is being launched to help reverse the trend of obesity.**
- **Workshops are conducted throughout the state to strengthen families**
 - Beginning Education Early (BEE) Program
 - Healthy Marriage Initiative
 - Youth Development Programs

Keep Food Safety in Mind for the Holidays

By Jean Weese

Most of us will be stuffing ourselves on all those delicious traditional holiday foods for the next few days and weeks, so it's certainly worthwhile to give a little attention to the rules of food safety as the United States Department of Agriculture advises. Often, people may have a food-borne illness and not recognize it for that. Food-borne illness often is characterized by flu-like symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fever. It is estimated that 80 percent of all cases of food-borne illnesses go unrecognized, because people assume they have the flu.

Bacteria in raw meat or poultry or its packaging can be spread to other foods, utensils and surfaces easily. This is called cross-contamination. Wash your hands after handling raw meat or poultry or its packaging to prevent contaminating anything else you touch. For example, you can become ill by picking up a piece of fruit and eating it after handling raw meat or poultry. Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling raw foods as well as after visiting the bathroom, caring for a sick person, changing a diaper, blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing and petting animals. Wash your hands with warm soap and water for 20 seconds. Dry your hands on a clean paper towel, thus avoiding towels which may have become contaminated through repeated use or by touching surfaces where raw meat or poultry has been. Prevent cross-contamination as well by washing counter tops and sinks with hot soapy water and sanitizing these with a solution of one teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach per quart of water. Sponges and dish cloths should also be rinsed with this solution. (A good practice is to keep a spray bottle of this solution handy and use it often in the kitchen.) Discard those packaging materials from meat and poultry; never reuse them with other foods.

Bacteria multiply rapidly between 40 and 140 degrees F. Two hours is the limit for food to be left within this range.

When in doubt, throw it out. When cooking or reheating poultry, the internal temperature should reach 165 degrees F. Cooking the stuffing inside the bird is just too risky. Don't do it.

To keep food out of the danger zone, it's important to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. When serving from a buffet table, keep hot foods above 140 degrees F with chafing dishes, crock pots and warming trays. You can use a candy thermometer to test the liquids and a meat thermometer for the solids, but a standard chef's stemmed thermometer is inexpensive and widely available. Don't forget to wash and sanitize thermometers before and after each use. If you are transporting food to another place where it will be eaten, employ a cooler with ice to carry the cold foods and use thermal-lined containers for the hot foods.

Having followed all these food safety rules, you and your family should be able to stay healthy and not miss any of the festivities. Happy holidays!

.....

Make Family Time Count

By Judy Edmond

To some, the fall season can be a depressing time of the year and to others, a happy time, depending on the family activities. In the wake of disaster, it is hard not to feel some degree of depression. This can be a time when families can reflect and reevaluate their goals.

Family time should be quality time spent together. Take this time to teach children some powerful lessons of caring and concern. The parent can set the best example. Below are some ideas:

- **Volunteer to help someone in need.**
- **Find ways to spend time with an older person.**
- **Volunteer at school.**
- **Go for a walk in your neighborhood to find out who your neighbors are.**
- **Create a family tradition.**
- **Put together jigsaw puzzles.**
- **Make a family collage.**
- **Make a family book of quotations – sayings from your kids or other family members you don't want to forget.**
- **Worship together.**

Holiday Shoppers: Don't Toy Around With Safety!

By Synithia Williams

'Tis the season where many are in pursuit of at least one gift for a particular child. However, in light of the growing number of toy-child injuries, there is a need for a more meticulous eye for labels and warnings regarding a child's age and maturity when purchasing toys. Gone are the days where one may have picked out toys because they were the newest or hottest gift item or in response to a child's request for a particular one. It's pertinent now to be especially aware of recalls on current as well as past purchases and to heed hazards and guidelines relating to each child's current stage in life.

In 2003, reportedly more than 200,000 children received medical treatment in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries and more than one-third of those injured were under five. Although only 11 deaths were reported to have occurred within the year, these are tragedies that could be prevented through awareness.

The major causes of most injuries are choking, strangulations and toxic hazards. Other dangers are related to the sharpness of toys or their parts, falls, loudness and propelled objects. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with "protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products," such as toys and baby cribs, by submitting them through an assessment process. Although the CPSC has checked the large majority of toys, not all toys for retail have received their examinations or are reflective of their standards. Thus, each parent or buyer would be wise to perform his own inspection to make sure that an item appears to be safe and appropriate for the particular recipient.

The following are CSPC guidelines beneficial to parents and other toy shoppers:

- **Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards to younger children.**
- **For infants, toddlers and all children who still mouth objects, avoid toys with small parts, that could pose a fatal choking hazard.**
- **Look for sturdy construction, such as tightly-secured eyes, noses and other potential small parts.**
- **For all children under 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.**

- **Do not purchase electric toys with heating elements for children under 8.**
- **Read labels. Look for toy labels that give age and safety recommendations and use that information as a guide.**
- **Check toy instructions for clarity – for you and, when appropriate, the child.**
- **Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys, which can cause suffocation, before they become deadly playthings.**

It is especially beneficial for parents to stay abreast of recalls for upcoming purchases and toys previously purchased that may still be in use by their children. Parents of small children may even consider investing in the purchase of a small part tester to measure toy parts for choking hazards. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age 3 cannot have parts less than 1¼ inches in diameter and 2¼ inches long. If the toy fits within the small part tester's measuring devices, it is a choking hazard for that particular age group. Outside of inspecting toys and staying abreast of recalls, many safety councils also advocate monitoring children at play with toys whenever possible to aid in the prevention of toy-related injury incidences. Many toys, regardless of design, may cause minor to major injuries when handled improperly or unsafely.

To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CSPC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or CSPC's teletypewriter at (800) 638-8270.

To view information on current and past recalls or join a CSPC subscription list, visit their Web site at www.cpsc.gov.

Guarding Against Identity Theft

By Lee Ann Clark

The busy shopping season is upon us once again, and it's time to take additional precautions against identity theft. Identity theft is a serious crime that occurs when someone uses your personal information to commit fraud or other crimes.

The distractions of the holidays and crowded stores can make you vulnerable to identity thieves. Prevention is your best defense against identity theft.

How can consumers minimize the risk of identity theft? The Identity Theft Resource Center offers the following advice:

- **Watch for monthly bills to ensure they are being delivered.**
- **Be aware of shoulder surfing that can be used to steal your information.**
- **Be cautious when giving information to telephone solicitors or purchasing products over the phone.**
- **Watch out for credit card skimming.**
- **Examine all mail and shred any containing sensitive information.**
- **Mail envelopes containing checks or sensitive information at the post office.**
- **Use secure server sites when shopping online.**
- **Carry your wallet and purse securely while shopping and limit what you carry.**
- **Cross-cut shredders make great gifts for the people you care about.**

If you suspect your personal information has been used by an identity thief, take action immediately! Contact the local police department where the identity theft occurred, contact all three major credit bureaus using their toll-free fraud number, close all accounts with bank and credit card companies that have been accessed fraudulently and always file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.

Enjoy your holidays, but protect yourself against identity theft. Following these tips may help convince a thief to find an easier target.

The Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Newsletter

The Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Newsletter is published quarterly by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Publisher: **Evelyn F. Crayton**, *Extension Assistant Director for Family and Community Programs*, Professor, Nutrition and Food Science, Auburn University

Editor: Carol Centrallo, Extension Specialist

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

Staying Healthy During the Holidays: Small Steps Can Go a Long Way

By Kathleen Tajeu

November and December are busy times of celebration in many cultures and religions. We often eat out more, share special foods with family and friends, and get less exercise or physical activity due to our busy schedules. These can be especially challenging times for people who are trying to prevent diabetes or maintain a healthy weight. Small adaptations can go a long way in protecting your health so you can enjoy this time of year. So here are just a few tips.

For healthier eating, consider the following. Concentrate on taste because small portions that you relish can give you as much enjoyment as a large quantity. Eat slowly and relish flavors. If you are eating out, split one meal with someone, or plan to take half of the meal home and eat it one of those times when you're too busy to stop and cook. When you are baking those family favorites, cut back on the amounts of sugar and fat in your recipes.

To keep physically active, try getting exercise in 10 minute blocks of time and aim to do that three times a day. It is easier to find multiple small blocks of time than a whole 30 minutes at once. As the day goes on, you will be more tired, so do something active in the morning or during the day. Finding the right clothes as the weather changes is challenging. Dress comfortably, but be sure you have shoes that fit well and socks that don't irritate your skin.

For further information, call your county Extension office or go to the Web sites for the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org and the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases at <http://www.niddk.nih.gov>.



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability. © 2005 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
AUBURN UNIVERSITY, ALABAMA 36849-5612
STATE HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Your Experts for Life



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #530
Auburn University, AL 36849