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A Recipe for Food Safety

June is National Home Safety Month



Almost no food is immune from contamination. Though most foodborne illness stems from raw animal foods — such as eggs, meats, and dairy products — fruits and vegetables may carry germs, too. Alfalfa and clover sprouts were tied to almost 23,000 cases of gastrointestinal illness and two deaths in the 1990s, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Foodborne disease can be caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Each year, it hospitalizes 325,000 people and kills up to 5,000. As warm weather arrives, it's vital to protect yourself. You'll probably eat more raw fruits and vegetables, enjoy picnics and barbecues — and store or transport food under less than perfect conditions. In order to minimize your risk of obtaining a foodborne illness, use the following helpful tips.

Be Careful with Produce

Treat them with care, just as you would with animal-based foods. Fruits and vegetables often come from nations without rigid safety standards. "Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly," says Tom Chiller, M.D., a CDC epidemic intelligence service officer. Don't skip fruits with inedible rinds. Bacteria on rinds can spread to the flesh during slicing.

Handle Susceptible Foods Carefully

"Bacteria need moisture content, protein, and carbohydrates to grow," says Susan Conley, director of food safety education for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Potato salad and macaroni salad offer ideal conditions, she says. Keep those dishes well chilled. Never let a starchy salad touch raw meat or utensils used on raw meats.

Contain Bacteria

Prevent bacteria from spreading from raw to cooked meats. If you carry a platter of burgers to the grill, use a second clean plate to take the meat from the grill.

Keep Foods Cold

Refrigeration doesn't kill bacteria; it stops or slows them from growing. Food can still go bad in the fridge — meats from bacteria; fruits, vegetables, and breads from molds. The bacterium *Listeria* is an exception in that it grows well in the cold.

Understand "Sell By" and "Use By" Dates

"Sell by" applies to stores, which can keep things colder in the back room before display than you do in your refrigerator. Even if the "sell by" date on raw poultry is a week away, you've only got two or three days to use it once you bring it home, Ms.

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Conley says. The "use by" date refers to an unopened package.

Keep Food Preparation Areas Clean

Wipe your sink with diluted bleach once a week. Avoid using sponges; change your dishcloth at least once daily.

Four Key Ingredients

Clean. Wash your hands with soap and water. Discard outer lettuce and cabbage leaves. Wash fruits and vegetables.

Chill. Refrigerate leftovers promptly. When you arrive home from the grocery store, put refrigerated items away first. Don't let milk sit out during a meal; pour what you or your family needs and put the container back in the fridge.

Cook. Heat hamburgers to 160 degrees on a meat thermometer. Cook egg yolks until firm.

Separate. Don't let raw foods such as vegetables touch raw meats.

Major Threats

Botulism (*Clostridium botulinum*)

- Symptoms: nausea, vomiting, fatigue, headache, dizziness, double vision, descending paralysis, and difficulty breathing.
- Prevention: Don't use food in cracked jars or cans that are swollen, leaking, or damaged, or that have bulging ends. Don't give honey or foods that contain honey to children under the age of one.

Clostridium (*Clostridium* species — not botulinum)

- Symptoms: primary symptoms are diarrhea and cramping 8-24 hours after eating spoiled food. Other symptoms may include nausea and fever. Vomiting may occur occasionally. Self-limiting and usually resolves in a day.
- Prevention: Thought to develop mostly in meats and meat products that have been warmed too long or rewarmed. Prepare food fresh and eat it soon after preparation.

C. jejuni (*Campylobacter jejuni*)

- Symptoms: muscle pain, headache, and fever followed by diarrhea, abdominal pain, and nausea.
- Prevention: Avoid raw or undercooked poultry, unpasteurized milk, and untreated water. Cook ground meats thoroughly.

E. coli (*Escherichia coli*)

- Symptoms: abdominal cramps, stomach pain, and watery or bloody diarrhea. Severe cases can be fatal.
- Prevention: Eat only thoroughly cooked meat and poultry. Wash produce, especially lettuce, thoroughly. Avoid unpasteurized milk and apple cider.

Listeria (*Listeria monocytogenes*)

- Symptoms: nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, headache, and fever. Can be fatal in the young and elderly.
- Prevention: Wash raw vegetables thoroughly, especially lettuce and cabbage leaves. Cook meat and poultry thoroughly and avoid unpasteurized dairy foods. Carefully observe "sell by" and "use by" dates on processed foods.

Salmonella (*Salmonella* species)

- Symptoms: nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, headache, diarrhea, and fever.
- Prevention: Thoroughly cook meat, poultry, fish, and eggs. Don't eat raw eggs in salad dressing and baking dough. Use separate cutting surfaces and knives to prepare raw and cooked foods. Never eat unpasteurized, raw, or undercooked foods of animal origin.

Staphylococcus aureus (*Staphylococcus aureus*)

- Symptoms: nausea, vomiting, chills, and shallow breathing.
- Prevention: Don't keep prepared foods — particularly cooked and cured meats and cheese and meat salads — sitting at room temperature for more than two hours. Store meat, fish, and poultry in the coldest part of the refrigerator.

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For more information on in-home safety:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/fodborneinfections_g.htm

<http://alliancewp.personaladvantage.com/content?cat=1000006&sub=1000128>



Practice Sun Safety, Whatever Your Age June 6th-12th is Sun Safety Week

You're never too old for the sun's rays to harm your skin. In fact, sun exposure is especially dangerous for aging skin, says Jerome Z. Litt, M.D., author of *Your Skin From A to Z*. "The skin is like a sponge and a bank. It soaks up all the rays and stores them forever," he says. "Because seniors' skin is so much thinner than younger people's skin, more rays are able to penetrate."

Here are ways to protect your skin from the sun's damaging rays:

- Avoid direct sunlight when it's strongest, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear protective clothing, such as broad-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and sunglasses that filter out ultraviolet (UV) light.
- Use sunscreens with an SPF of 15 or higher.

Apply it liberally to exposed areas, including bald areas of your scalp.

- Avoid sunlamps and tanning booths.

Sunscreen Smarts

No matter what time of year, you should remember to put on sunscreen when you spend time outdoors. Here are tips from the Skin Cancer Foundation on getting the most from your sunscreen:

- Choose a sunscreen that will protect you against both UVA and UVB rays.
- Spread the sunscreen evenly on all skin that is exposed to the sun. Don't scrimp on how much sunscreen you use.
- Don't forget to apply sunscreen to your lips, ears, neck, hands, feet, and scalp if your hair is thinning.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or more frequently if you have been swimming, sweating, or using a towel to dry off.

Your risk for melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer, rises if you have fair skin or hair, a family history of melanoma, a history of severe, blistering sunburns in youth, more than 50 moles, and a particular form of mole called dysplastic nevi.

Along with a yearly skin exam by your doctor, you should examine your skin every three months. Ask a relative or a close friend that you trust to check areas you can't see or reach.

"Look for any changes in the skin, such as spots that bleed, crust, itch, or change in texture," Dr. Litt says. Other common warning signs: new growths, sores that don't heal, and changes in the size, shape, or color of moles and birthmarks.

Skin cancer can occur anywhere, but it's most common in the places that have been exposed to the sun the most (such as the head, face, neck, arms, and hands). If you notice anything suspicious, visit your doctor.

For more information:

<http://www.sunsafetyalliance.org/>

<http://alliancewp.personaladvantage.com/content?sub=10000274>