How to avoid food-borne illnesses

gwinnettcounty
Cooperative Extension Education Resource

From www.foodsafety.gov

Food safety is a concern year-round. Relax and enjoy picnics and other summer festivities with family and friends, but be careful. When cooking indoors and outdoors, remember food safety is an important factor of food fun. Be sure to take the right precautions to avoid food poisoning and food-borne illnesses any time of the year.

The following symptoms should be checked out by a physician: nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fever, cramps, double vision, trouble swallowing, and paralysis.

Most people get sick within four to 48 hours after eating bad food. If symptoms are severe, please contact a physician or go to the hospital immediately. Did you know:
- Around 30 million Americans will suffer from food borne illnesses this year?
- Nearly all cases can be linked to unsafe food handling practices?

So, here's what you can do to protect your family from food-borne illnesses:

Safety at the supermarket:
- Check the "sell by" or "use by" date. If it's expired, don't buy it
- Don't buy cans with dents, bulges, or rust
- If frozen foods aren't solidly frozen, don't buy them
- Open cartons of fresh eggs. If any are cracked, don't buy them
- Never buy dairy products that are unpasteurized
- Bring refrigerated and frozen foods home immediately after shopping and store them promptly

Store it right:
- Set refrigeration between 35°F and 40°F; freezers should be at or below 0°F
- Refrigerate meat, fish, and poultry on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to prevent raw juices from coming into contact with other foods
- Follow the "use by," "keep refrigerated," and "safe handling" information on packages
- If a package smells or looks suspicious, throw it out even if the "use by" date has not expired

Preparing safe food:

- Always thaw frozen meat, fish, or poultry in the refrigerator
- Always marinate food in the refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter, and discard leftover marinades
- Keep your cooking area clean
- Wash hands with soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling any meat products
- Cover cuts or sores with bandages or wear plastic gloves
- Never chop vegetables or salad ingredients on a cutting board used to prepare raw meats, fish, or poultry unless the board was thoroughly cleaned between uses
- Thoroughly wash all utensils, containers, cutting boards, and work surfaces
- Use separate serving plates and utensils for raw and cooked foods

Cooking to perfection:

- Use separate utensils for sampling and stirring
- Don't sample foods that contain raw meat, fish, poultry, or eggs unless they are fully cooked
- Don't roast meat or poultry at temperatures below 325°F. Cooking foods at low temperatures for long periods of time may encourage bacterial growth
- Don't baste foods with marinades used on raw meats during the last 10 minutes of cooking

Serve it safe:

- Always use clean utensils and serving plates for cooked foods
- Don't leave any perishable food like meat at room temperature for more than two hours
- Pack lunches in insulated containers with a freezer pack
- Serve hot foods at a temperature above 140°F and cold foods below 40°F

Handling leftovers:

- Refrigerate cooked food within two hours after cooking; divide large amounts of leftovers into small portions and place in shallow containers for quick cooling
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F or until steaming hot
- Label and date cooked foods. If you don't plan on eating them within a few days, freeze them