

PREVENTION HEAD TO TOE

Preventing Food Poisoning

BE FOOD SAFE: PROTECT YOURSELF FROM FOOD POISONING

Foodborne illness, sometimes called food poisoning, is a common, costly – yet preventable - public health problem. Each year, about 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases.

COMMON FOODBORNE ILLNESSES AND SYMPTOMS



The most common foodborne illnesses are Norovirus, Salmonella, Clostridium, and Campylobacter. Symptoms of food poisoning can be as commonplace as diarrhea or as life-threatening as organ failure. These illnesses can even cause long-term health problems or death. Young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with weak immune systems are more at risk for food poisoning and should be especially careful. When these groups of people eat contaminated food, they have a greater chance of becoming severely sick with problems like miscarriage or kidney failure. See your doctor or health care provider if you have diarrhea along with high fever (temperature over 101°F, measured orally), blood in the stools, prolonged vomiting that prevents you from keeping liquids down, signs of dehydration, including a decrease in urination, a dry mouth and throat, and feeling dizzy when standing up, or if you have had diarrhea for more than 3 days.

BE FOOD-SAFE SAVVY: KNOW THE RISKS AND RULES

Everyone is at risk for food poisoning. Knowing the rules of food safety will help prevent germs sometimes found in food from making you sick. There are things that you can do to protect yourself. For example, do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs or raw (unpasteurized) milk.

RULES FOR FOOD SAFETY

Following these simple steps can help keep your family safer from food poisoning at home

CLEAN

Wash your hands and kitchen surfaces often. Illness-causing bacterial can survive in many places around your kitchen, including your hands, utensils and cutting boards.

- Wash hands the right way – for 20 seconds with soap and running water. Be sure to scrub the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.



- Wash surfaces and utensils after each use. Clean utensils with hot soapy water. Clean surfaces and cutting boards with a bleach solution.
- Wash fruits and vegetables – but not meat, poultry, or eggs. Even if you plan to peel fruits and veggies, it’s important to wash them first because the bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside as you cut or peel them.

SEPARATE

Don’t cross-contaminate. Even after you have cleaned your hands and surfaces thoroughly, raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs can still spread germs to ready-to-eat foods-unless you keep them separate.

- Use separate cutting boards, plates and utensils for raw (uncooked) produce and for raw (uncooked) meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- Keep meat, poultry, seafood and eggs separate from all other foods while shopping and in the refrigerator.

COOK

Cook to the right temperature. While many people think they can tell when food is “done” simply by checking its color and texture, there’s no way to be sure it’s safe without following a few important but simple steps.

- Use a food thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature: 145° F for whole meats (allowing the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or consuming), 160° F for ground meats, and 165° for all poultry.
- During meal times, while the food is being served and eaten, keep it hot. After meals are over, refrigerate leftover food quickly.
- Microwave food thoroughly (to 165°F).

CHILL

Keep your refrigerator below 40° F and refrigerate foods properly. Germs can grow in many foods within 2 hours unless you refrigerate them. (During the summer heat, that time is reduced to 1 hour.)

- Refrigerate foods that tend to spoil more quickly (like fruits, and vegetables, milk, eggs and meats) within 2 hours.
- Thaw or marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- Know when to throw food out.

For more information

- Call a Blues On Call Health Coach at **1-888-BLUE-428**.
- Go to www.highmarkblueshield.com and log on to your member website.