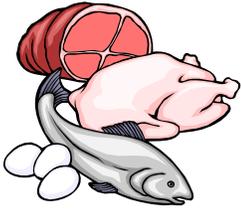


Live Healthy Georgia – Seniors Taking Charge!

September 2007 Newsletter



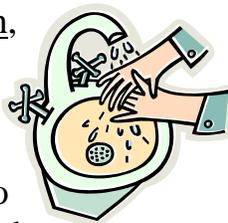
September is National Food Safety Education Month!

By Mindy Bell, BS and Bree Marsh, MS

To enjoy all the benefits of nutritious foods, it is important to start by keeping foods safe to eat. The familiar saying “safety first” is no exception when it comes to food, because handling and preparing food properly protects you and your family from foodborne illness. Home food safety starts from the time you buy your food, and continues to the time it reaches the dinner table and leftovers are put away and eaten later.

There are four easy steps that can help you to fight germs and keep food safe to eat: clean, separate, cook, and chill. These steps are particularly important for older adults, since the immune system may not be able to fight off illness as well as it could in the younger years.

The first step, clean, reminds you to wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds. You should do this before, during, and after meal preparation to prevent



spread of germs as you cook. It is also important to keep utensils and surfaces, such as knives and countertops, clean to prevent cross-contamination (spreading germs from one surface to another).

The next step, separate, is especially important when handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Be sure to keep these foods separate from others (such as fruits and vegetables) in the refrigerator when you store them, and keep cooked meat, poultry, and fish separate from raw. Designate a cutting board strictly for meat, poultry, and seafood, and use a separate board for ready-to-eat foods, like fruits and vegetables. Be sure to clean your boards thoroughly using the dishwasher, or in hot, soapy water so they will be clean and ready for the next use.

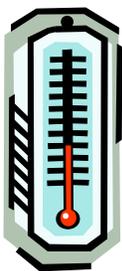


When you prepare meals, another tip to remember is to cook foods to the proper temperature. The best way to check temperature is with a food

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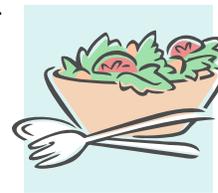
thermometer because color and touch are not reliable ways to tell if a food is cooked through. Cooking foods to the proper internal temperatures will kill harmful bacteria that could cause illness. Meat, fish, and poultry differ slightly for recommended internal cooking temperatures, so many resources provide handy charts that list the safe temperatures to reach for a variety of meats, poultry, and seafood. Target temperatures range from 145°F for fish to 165°F for poultry. FightBAC.org is one website that offers this information.

Keeping foods at the proper temperature for later use is also important to prevent foodborne illness, so chill is another step that will help you to keep food safe. Be sure to refrigerate foods promptly when you bring them home from the store, and refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of a meal. If you haven't checked the temperature of your refrigerator recently, be sure that it is lower than 40°F to prevent growth of harmful bacteria. Use a thermometer in your refrigerator so you can check the temperature often. When you thaw frozen foods, remember to thaw either in the refrigerator, microwave, or



under cold, running water. Thawing foods at room temperature puts them in the “danger zone” (40°-140°F), which allows bacteria to grow rapidly.

While we often think of raw meat, fish, and poultry when it comes to food safety, handling produce and other foods properly is just as important. Here are a few tips for handling fruits and vegetables safely:



1. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under cool, running water before you eat them.
2. If you cut up or peel fruits and vegetables, refrigerate them within 2 hours of doing so.
3. Take care when choosing fruits and vegetables, being sure to pick those free of mold and bruises at the grocery store.
4. Make sure the juices you buy are pasteurized.

For more information, see:

The Partnership for Food Safety Education's FightBAC website (go to “Safe Food Handling” section) at:
<http://www.fightbac.org/>

The American Dietetic Association's Home Food Safety Tips at:
www.homefoodsafety.org