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### Food and Water Safety

#### SAFE SHOPPING

You can decrease your risk of food poisoning right from the start.

- Start your shopping by picking up foods that do not need to be refrigerated. Pick up refrigerated/frozen foods last so they will still be cold by the time you get home. Once home, put cold items away immediately.
- Pack your groceries so that the cold and frozen items are placed together. Bring your own ice chest or insulated bag for transporting cold and frozen items home.
- Never buy dented or bulging cans or cracked jars.
- Check the “sell by” or “use by” dates printed on perishable products. Don’t buy food items when those dates have passed.
- Buy Grade A eggs or better that are refrigerated in the store. Always check eggs for any cracks or discoloration before you buy them.
- Buy only pasteurized milk, dairy products, juices and honey. Avoid “raw” foods.
- Cheeses and meats from the deli counter are more likely to be contaminated. It’s safer to purchase the prepackaged types.
- Reports of bacterial growth in prepackaged luncheon meats has made it necessary to heat until steaming precooked products, like sliced salami, ham, turkey, hot dogs and others.
- Don’t buy fish from fish counters that appear unclean and don’t buy cooked fish that has been displayed next to raw fish.
- Choose fruits and vegetables with intact skin, and free of bruises, soft spots, dents, and mold.

#### SAFE FOOD STORAGE

- Buy a thermometer and check your refrigerator and freezer temperatures monthly.
  - Refrigerator temperature should be 35-40<sup>o</sup> F.
  - Freezer temperature should be below 0<sup>o</sup> F.
- Follow the storage information on package labels, or refer to the guidelines for storing perishable items listed in the Safe Storage table (see next page).
- Refrigerate raw meat and poultry on a covered plate on the bottom shelf to keep juices from dripping onto other foods or refrigerator shelves.
- Store eggs in the refrigerator. Keep them in their carton and placed in the center of the refrigerator and not in the refrigerator door or on the counter top. Do NOT wash eggs before storing or using.
- Store canned goods in a cool dry place. Rotate cans so older items are used first. Use the F.I.F.O. rule: First In, First Out.
- If a package looks suspicious, is slimy or sticky or has an “off” smell, throw it out even if the “use buy” or “sell by” date has not passed.

**REMEMBER: *When in doubt, throw it out!***

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For more information or to sign up for nutrition classes call:

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## SAFE FOOD STORAGE

FOOD	IN REFRIGERATOR (35-40 <sup>0</sup> F)	IN FREEZER (0 <sup>0</sup> F)
<b>POULTRY</b>		
Fresh pieces and whole	1-2 days	3-4 months
Cooked pieces	1-3 days	1-3 months
<b>MEAT</b>		
Beefsteaks	3-5 days	6-12 months
Pork and Lamb chops	3-5 days	4-6 months
All types of roast	3-5 days	4-6 months
Ground meat (or poultry)	1-2 days	3-4 months
Meat leftovers	3-4 days	2-3 months
Lunchmeats	3-5 days (if opened)	1-2 months (if unopened)
Hot dogs	1 week (if opened)	1-2 months (if unopened)
<b>SEAFOOD</b>		
Fresh lean fish	1-2 days	3-6 months
Fresh fatty fish	1-2 days	1-3 months
<b>DAIRY PRODUCTS</b>		
Milk	5 days past date on carton	doesn't freeze well
Cheeses, hard or processed	3-4 weeks	6 weeks (hard) 4 months (processed)
Margarine	4-6 months, unopened	12 months
Butter	1-2 weeks	6-9 months
Eggs		
Fresh, in shell	3-5 weeks	don't freeze
Hard boiled	1 week	don't freeze
Egg substitute	10 days, unopened 3 days, opened	1 year, unopened don't freeze opened
Mayonnaise	2 months	don't freeze

\*Adapted from the Food Marketing Institute; USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, Home and Garden Bulletin No. 248, September 1990, and the Mayo Clinic Nutrition Letter, April 1990. Food Keeper Brochure

[http://www.fmi.org/consumer/foodkeeper/Food\\_Keeper\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.fmi.org/consumer/foodkeeper/Food_Keeper_Brochure.pdf)

<http://www.fmi.org/consumer/foodkeeper/search.htm>

### A few more reminders on storing food safely and handling leftovers...

- Wrap items tightly with plastic wrap or freezer paper before freezing or use heavy-duty zip-lock freezer bags.
- Always label and date items before freezing or storing leftovers in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Divide leftovers and put in shallow containers and put in refrigerator immediately after a meal.
- Use airtight containers to store leftovers.
- Reheat leftovers to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F or steaming throughout.
- In general, use refrigerated leftovers within three days (72 hours) or throw them out.
- If you don't know how old a leftover is, remember: *when in doubt, throw it out!*

## SAFE FOOD PREPARATION

Improper food handling or preparation in the home causes most cases of food poisoning. Keeping surfaces, utensils, sponges and towels clean and dry is one of the best ways to prevent bacterial contamination.

- Wring out the sponge/dishcloth and allow it to dry between uses or put in microwave for 60 seconds to kill any bacteria that may be present.

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- If you don't use disposable paper towels, wash dishcloths, sponges and hand towels daily in a bleach solution. Sponges may be put in the dishwasher or microwave.

### **SAFE FOOD PREPARATION continued**

- Keep your hands clean; wash them often with hot soapy water before, during, and after food preparation.
- Cover cuts or sores on your hands with plastic kitchen gloves.
- Disinfect countertops, utensils, cutting boards and appliances, as well as shelves and handles of the refrigerator, freezer and cupboards. Use a solution of 1-teaspoon bleach to 1-quart clean water.
- Use separate plastic cutting boards, one for meats and one for fresh fruits and vegetables, or use paper plates as a "disposable" cutting boards. Remember to scrub cutting boards between uses with hot soapy water and rinse with a disinfectant.

### **PREPARATION TIPS FOR SPECIFIC FOODS**

#### **Eggs, Milk and Dairy Products**

- Eat only well cooked eggs. No soft cooked, runny, over easy or sunny side up eggs. Egg dishes should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F. Do NOT wash eggs before using or storing.
- Don't eat foods prepared with raw eggs such as Caesar salad, chocolate mousse, homemade eggnog, or mayonnaise. Substitute frozen and /or pasteurized egg products in recipes, which call for not cooking or undercooking eggs. Do not eat raw cookie dough.
- Always use products before the expiration date.
- If cheese gets moldy, stay on the safe side and throw it out.
- Eat only soft cheeses that have been made with pasteurized milk. (Feta, Brie, Camembert and blue veined). Check the label.

#### **Fruits & Vegetables**

- Throw out fruits or vegetables if they develop bruises, soft spots, dents, or mold.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables well in cool clean water with a vegetable brush. Avoid hard to clean produce, such as raspberries, sprouts, lettuce or other leafy greens that are eaten raw.
- If possible, peel before eating raw.

#### **Meat, Poultry and Fish**

- Washing raw poultry, beef, pork, lamb, or veal before cooking it is **NOT** recommended.
- Defrost frozen item in the refrigerator not on the countertop. Remember to place the item on a plate to catch any dripping.
- Marinate in the refrigerator, not on the countertop.
- Buy a meat thermometer. An "instant read" thermometer can be purchased at the grocery store. In general foods should be cooked until the inside temperature is at least 160°F (71°C). You cannot tell its doneness by the color. Use a thermometer.
- Be finicky about the temperature of hamburgers, meatloaf and other ground meat foods, considered high-risk sources of E. coli, and which can cause bloody diarrhea and dehydration. While steaks generally thought to be safer, some are injected with meat tenderizers and other chemicals and that process may introduce E. coli bacteria inside the meat,
- Chicken and turkey will be safe to eat when cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F. Check the temperature in several places and make sure all are to 165°F. Check the inner most part of the thigh and wing and thickest part of the breast.
- Cook fish for at least 5 minutes after all parts have reached 145°F to look opaque and firm and flake easily with a fork. Do not eat sushi, sashimi, ceviche and other raw fish items.
- Avoid low temperature cooking. A safe cooking/roasting temperature is 325°F or higher.
- Packaged luncheon and deli meats should be heated to steaming hot to kill any bacteria.
- Avoid smoked fish, which may not be heated to temperatures high enough to kill bacteria.

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## **EATING AWAY FROM HOME**

### **At the restaurant**

- Check that the restrooms are clean, have hot water, soap, toilet paper and hand paper towels.
- Make sure utensils, the place settings and the table, are clean. Return dirty utensils, food that is not hot enough or food that is not cooked thoroughly. It is YOUR HEALTH that you are protecting.
- Order meats medium-well to well done to assure that they are cooked thoroughly.
- Do not eat chicken or turkey that is pink near the bone.
- Avoid salad bars and buffets. These items are easily contaminated.

### **Packing a lunch**

- When packing a lunch from home, make sure the container is clean and is insulated.
- Choose foods that do not easily spoil.
- Foods are less likely to spoil if they are refrigerated. If unable to refrigerate your lunch, choose less perishable foods like peanut butter, trail mix or processed cheese. Single serving canned foods like tuna or chicken and fruit are also good choices.
- Prepare a lunch the night before and store it in the refrigerator. Pack a frozen drink or use a reusable freeze-pack to help keep food cold.
- Take safe bottled water and snacks whenever you leave the house.

## **SAFE WATER AND DRINKS**

Fluids are necessary to avoid dehydration. A minimum of 10-12, 8-ounce glasses of water per day is recommended for adult men and 9-11, 8-ounce glasses are recommended for women. Water may be a source of infectious agents such as Cryptosporidium, Microsporidium and Mycobacterium aviumintracellulare (MAI). Follow basic water safety tips.

- Do not drink water from lakes, rivers, streams, or springs.
- Tap water in some communities may be contaminated. If unsure, the CDC recommends boiling water at a rolling boil for at least 1-minute then storing it in a clean container with a lid in the refrigerator.
- Bottled water is considered safe if is processed by distillation or reverse osmosis. When using bottled water, look for the words reverse osmosis or distilled on the label.
- The words "Purified" or Filtered" do not promise that the water is free of cryptosporidium.
- Filtered water is considered safe when:
  - Reverse osmosis (with or without NSF testing).
  - Absolute pore size of 1 micron or smaller (with or without NSF testing).
  - Tested and certified by NSF Standard No. 53 or No. 58 for cyst reduction and removal.
  - [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cryptosporidiosis/factsht\\_crypto\\_prevent\\_ci.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/cryptosporidiosis/factsht_crypto_prevent_ci.htm)
- For more information about filters call the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) at 1-800-NSF-8010 or check their web site at [www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org) or <http://www.nsf.org/certified/DWTU/>
- If you purchase a water filter for your home, change water filters regularly.
- Filling containers with water from water dispensing machines may be unsafe. The cleanliness of the machines and type of filter used, gives cause for concern. The water may be cheaper, but best to avoid.
- Remember water used in making beverages and ice must be safe before use. Ice sold at the grocery store and served in restaurants, bars or movies may not be safe.
- Sodas and drinks from a fountain, and tea and coffee, which have not been heated to boiling, may contain contaminants. Avoid sun tea.
- Bottled and canned processed drinks and hot coffee or tea, are probably safe.

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