

# eHouseCall

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A Monthly Electronic Newsletter from HealthLink

## Doctor's Bag



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### HOW TO RECOGNIZE FOODBORNE ILLNESS

According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately 76 million Americans get sick each year from eating contaminated food.

Harmful bacteria are the most common cause. Sometimes foods become contaminated before they reach the grocers' shelves but most often, bacteria set in as a result of improper food handling in the kitchen or when cooking/serving food outdoors.

Symptoms can range from mild to severe and include:

- ◆ Upset stomach
- ◆ Nausea and vomiting
- ◆ Abdominal cramps
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Dehydration

If symptoms are relatively mild, start out by increasing fluids. Electrolyte replacements (such as sports drinks) or flat ginger ale are good options. If nothing stays down, sucking on ice chips may offer some relief. Small amounts of bland food may be taken as tolerated once symptoms begin to subside.

Call your doctor immediately if symptoms seem severe, include severe abdominal pain or last longer than 24 hours.

## HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

JULY

### SUMMERTIME FOOD SAFETY TIPS

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes the following recommendations for summertime food handling:

#### Wash Hands, Utensils and Food Preparation Surfaces

- ◆ Food safety begins with hand-washing, even in outdoor settings. It can be as simple as using a water jug, some soap and paper towels.
- ◆ Consider using moist disposable towelettes for cleaning hands.
- ◆ Keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

#### Preparing Fruits and Vegetables

- ◆ Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten, under running tap water.
- ◆ Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing.

#### Safe Grilling Tips

- ◆ Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry or seafood. Don't reuse marinade.
- ◆ If you partially cook food before grilling, do so immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.

#### Serving Food Safely

- ◆ Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- ◆ Don't use the same platter and utensils that previously held raw meat or seafood to serve cooked meat and seafood.
- ◆ Foods like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can be placed directly on ice or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.
- ◆ Food should not sit out for more than one hour in temperatures above 90°F.



## DidUKnow?

It's important to cook meats, fish and seafood thoroughly. Using a food thermometer will help eliminate the guesswork.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) suggests the following internal temperatures as guidelines for properly grilled meats, fish and seafood:

- ◆ Beef, veal and lamb steaks and roasts – 145°F for medium rare, 160°F for medium, 170°F for well done
- ◆ Ground pork and ground beef – 160°F
- ◆ Ground poultry – 165°F
- ◆ Poultry breasts – 170°F
- ◆ Whole poultry (place thermometer in thigh) – 180°F
- ◆ Fin fish – 145°F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork
- ◆ Shrimp, lobster and crabs – the meat should be pearly and opaque
- ◆ Clams, oysters and mussels – until the shells open

You can keep food hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals so it won't overcook. Be sure to clean your grill thoroughly after each use.

#### Information Sources

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety, Defense and Outreach, June 22, 2005, "Food Safety Tips for a Safe and Healthy 4th of July"

Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE), "Safe Food Handling" ([www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org))

Medline Plus, A Service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, "Food Contamination and Poisoning" ([www.nlm.gov/medlineplus/foodcontaminationandpoisoning.html](http://www.nlm.gov/medlineplus/foodcontaminationandpoisoning.html))

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