

Foodborne Illness



Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

"Serving the community since 1936 in Health Protection, Health Education and Disease Prevention"

FACTS: *(Information from Michigan Department of Community Health)*

- A foodborne illness is a disease that is transmitted to humans by food. Many different disease-causing microbes, or pathogens, can contaminate foods, so there are many different foodborne infections. In addition, poisonous chemicals or other harmful substances can cause foodborne diseases if they are present in food.
- Foodborne illness outbreaks involve two or more unrelated cases having similar features or involving the same pathogen; or single incidents of certain rare foodborne pathogens. (Based on definition in Michigan Food Law, P.A. 92 of 2000, Section 3103)
- The most commonly recognized foodborne illnesses are those caused by the bacteria *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, and *E. coli* O157:H7, and by a group of viruses called calicivirus, also known as Norovirus.
- The populations most at risk for contracting a foodborne illness are infants and young children, pregnant women, and the elderly.
- Many food-related illnesses go unreported due to the mistaken belief that it is just the "24 hour flu". Common foodborne illness symptoms consist of nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea and on average last 24 to 48 hours.

Food Safety Month

SERVICES AVAILABLE:

Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

(906) 779-7239 – EH Clerk

or

(906) 265-9913

www.didhd.org

The local public health department is an important part of the food safety system. Often, calls from concerned citizens are how outbreaks are first detected. If a public health official contacts you to find out more about an illness you had, your cooperation is important.

In public health investigations, it can be as important to talk to healthy people as to ill people. Your cooperation may be needed even if you are not ill.

Contact your local health department to report a suspected foodborne illness.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: *(Information from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)*

What foods are most associated with foodborne illness?

- Raw foods of animal origin are the most likely to be contaminated; that is, raw meat and poultry, raw eggs, unpasteurized milk, and raw shellfish.
- Foods that mingle the products of many individual animals, such as bulk raw milk, pooled raw eggs, or ground beef, are particularly hazardous because a pathogen present in any one of the animals may contaminate the whole batch.
- Fruits and vegetables consumed raw are a particular concern. Washing can decrease but not eliminate contamination, so the consumers can do little to protect themselves.

Improper handling of food is the most common cause of foodborne illness. The two most common mistakes are:

- Food not being maintained or cooked at temperatures that prevent or destroy microbial growth
- Cross contamination from raw to ready- to-eat foods. The overgrowth of bacteria may cause gastrointestinal discomfort, vomiting, muscle aches and other associated symptoms.

It only takes a few simple precautions to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases:

- **COOK:** meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly. Using a thermometer to measure the internal temperature of meat is a good way to be sure that it is cooked sufficiently to kill bacteria.
- **SEPARATE:** Don't cross-contaminate one food with another. Avoid cross-contaminating foods by washing hands, utensils, and cutting boards after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry and before they touch another food.
- **CHILL:** Refrigerate leftovers promptly. Bacteria can grow quickly at room temperature, so refrigerate leftover foods if they are not going to be eaten within 4 hours.
- **CLEAN:** Wash produce. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables in running tap water to remove visible dirt and grime. Remove and discard the outermost leaves of a head of lettuce or cabbage. Because bacteria can grow well on the cut surface of fruit or vegetable, be careful not to contaminate these foods while slicing them up on the cutting board, and avoid leaving cut produce at room temperature for many hours.

RESOURCES:

Michigan Department of Community Health - Foodborne Illness

<http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186-32755---,00.html>

Michigan Department of Agriculture - Food Safety in the Home

http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1566_2404_2427---,00.html

Michigan Department of Agriculture - Food Recalls

http://www.michigan.gov/mda/1,1607,7-125-1566_2404_2437---,00.html

Center for Disease Control - Food-related diseases

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/food/index.htm>

Food Safety and Inspection Service

[Foodborne illness fact sheets](#)

Food Safety Information Center

http://foodsafety.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=16&tax_level=1

