



COOKING

&

KITCHEN TIPS

Prevent Food Poisoning in Your Home

Food poisoning ranks second only to the common cold as the most frequent cause of illness in this country, according to the Center for Disease Control. Food poisoning results frequently from carelessness in handling, preparation and storage of food.

Poor food-handling practices in the home often cause illness in the family, even though foods were safe to eat when you bought or first prepared them. Poor sanitation, insufficient cooking and improper cooling and storage can allow bacteria in food to increase to dangerous levels. Outbreaks of illness from food contaminated by harmful bacteria are especially common during the hot summer months when perishable foods are carried on picnics and cookouts without proper refrigeration.

You can protect your family from food borne illness by following these steps:

1. Practice careful personal hygiene (all members of the household)
2. Keep all dishes, utensils, kitchen equipment, and work surfaces clean
3. Keep perishable foods either hot or cold
4. Cool and store foods carefully

The possibilities for error are especially great when large quantities of food are handled or when time schedules are hectic. Large quantities of food do not heat or cool as quickly as smaller batches.

For example, a large kettle of chili, or spaghetti sauce, will cool very slowly. Bacteria grow quickly when food is between 40 degrees F and 140 degrees F. In the process of heating or cooling, a food is in the hazardous temperature range allowing bacterial growth.

Quick cooling is essential to prevent this hazard. You can do this easily by dividing the large quantities into smaller amounts. Then, set the pans in ice cold water. Stir occasionally to hurry cooling, or refrigerate the food in shallow pans (less than two inches deep). Leave pans uncovered until cooled and do not stack them. This reduces the time the food is in the dangerous temperature zone.

Life begins at 40 degrees F for most bacteria. Safe food handling saves money and protects health.

Source: NDSU Extension Service Nutrition Specialists

