

SAFETY SENSE

Tips For Preventing Foodborne Illness

(NAPSA)—The good news is that fewer people are coming down with what's commonly known as "food poisoning." Yet while the numbers are declining, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still estimates that about 76 million Americans contract foodborne illnesses each year.

Also, a new survey by *Consumer Reports* magazine found high levels of potentially harmful bacteria in chicken purchased from stores across the country. The survey found either *Campylobacter* or *Salmonella* in about half of all chickens tested, down from about 75 percent in 1997.

Although the food industry works to ensure product safety, you've got to do your part once you leave the grocery store. Infectious germs can spread quickly if food is not handled, prepared and stored safely after purchase.

The Three "Cs" of Food Safety: Cleaning, Cooking and Chilling:

Cleaning

- Wash fruits and vegetables—including pre-packaged salads and melons—under cool running water. Refrigerate cut produce promptly.

- Wash your hands after handling raw meat, poultry or fish. Use one cutting board for raw meats and another for other foods.

- Wash all food contact surfaces thoroughly after each use.

- Sanitize cutting board, countertops and cooking surfaces with a solution of 1-3 tablespoons liquid chlorine bleach, (plain, unscented) per gallon of water. Let stand two minutes, rinse and air dry.

- Soak sponges, dishcloths and towels in a stronger solution of $\frac{3}{4}$



Proper storage and handling of food are key steps in preventing foodborne illness.

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Cooking

- Cook roasts and steaks to at least 145°F. Cook ground meat, in which bacteria can spread during grinding, to at least 160°F. Whole poultry should be cooked to 180°F. Cook fish until it is opaque and flakes easily with a fork.

- Make sure there are no cold spots in food when you microwave it. Cover food, stir and rotate it for even cooking.

- Don't consume anything containing uncooked or unpasteurized eggs.

Chilling

- Don't defrost or marinate on the kitchen counter. Use the refrigerator, cold running water or the microwave instead.

- Refrigerate leftover meat and other perishables within two hours of cooking and serving.

For more information on preventing foodborne illnesses, visit the Chlorine Chemistry Council Web site at www.c3.org.