

HEALTH ALERT!

When Your Meal Bites Back: Tips For Avoiding Food Poisoning

(NAPSA)—Around the world, food-borne illnesses have become increasingly common. In the United States alone, millions of people get a food-related illness each year.

“Even the healthiest foods can make a person sick if they aren’t handled, cooked or stored properly,” says Dr. Robert Berkow, editor in chief of *Your Health Now*, a new health magazine from the global pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc. Here are some tips on how to avoid getting sick:

- Always wash hands before handling food. Illnesses are easily transferred from person to person through food. Washing hands before touching fruits, vegetables and other foods helps to kill any bacteria that may be transferred from the person’s hand to the food.

- When handling raw meat, poultry or pork, always clean up thoroughly.

Don’t just wash your hands but also clean the surfaces of cutting boards, countertops and utensils you use. The bacteria known as salmonella spreads easily on surfaces that come in contact with raw meat.

- Avoid eating undercooked food. Undercooked beef, chicken and seafood increase a person’s chance of getting salmonella or *E. coli*, another type of bacteria. This can cause fever, cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

- Do not eat foods that contain raw eggs. Raw eggs may be contaminated with salmonella, which



Cooked foods should not be left to stand at room temperatures for long periods. Refrigerate leftovers promptly.

can be killed by cooking. When cooking, always throw away cracked or dirty eggs.

- Avoid drinking juices that have not been pasteurized. The pasteurization process kills bacteria such as *E. coli*.

- Avoid canned foods that are bulging or dented, or jars that are cracked. Lids should not be loose or swollen. Look at the “sell by” and “use by” dates. Avoid foods that will expire soon after purchasing and never buy outdated foods.

- Properly store and refrigerate foods when they’re brought home. Cooked foods should not be left to stand at room temperatures for long periods before serving, and leftovers should be refrigerated within two hours.

- When in doubt, throw it out. If you aren’t sure if that leftover is safe to eat, then toss it in the trash.

For more information on health issues that affect you and your family, visit YourHealthNow.com.