SAFETY SENSE

Keeping Meals—And Families—Safe

(NAPSA)—Home cooks who follow a few tips could keep safety on the menu—and food-borne illnesses off of it.

For instance, something as simple as buying meat and poultry last, right before you check out at the grocery store, could help keep it from spoiling.

Also, be sure to separate meat and poultry from other food in your shopping cart to prevent cross contamination and drive directly home from the store and refrigerate all meat immediately.

The United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service offers these additional tips:

Before You Cook

Poultry can be refrigerated for up to two days in a marinade. Just be sure it is covered—and for easy cleanup, use food-grade plastic bags and then discard them when you are through. Also, never use marinade from raw poultry as a sauce unless it's boiled first to destroy bacteria.

If you brine poultry, do so in food-grade plastic, stainless steel or glass containers. Totally submerge the poultry in the solution and store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to two days after the meat is thawed. Discard brine after use.

If basting poultry, remember that each time the oven door is opened, the oven temperature is lowered and additional cooking time may be needed. Always use clean utensils to avoid cross contamination.
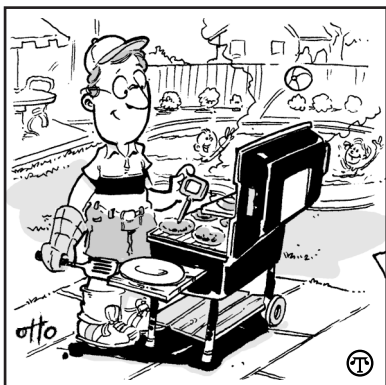
Simple food safety tips can help keep your family safe.

Safe Temperatures

Use a meat thermometer to be certain meat is cooked to a safe temperature. The thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the food and not touch bone, fat or gristle. Safe temperatures include:

• Whole poultry, poultry breasts and ground poultry: 165 degrees

• Beef hamburgers: 160 degrees

• Beef, veal and lamb: Medium rare: 145 degrees, medium:160 degrees

• All cuts of pork: 160 degrees.

Know The Signs

In those rare cases when food-borne illness might occur, it pays to know the symptoms. They range from upset stomach, diarrhea, fever, vomiting, cramps and dehydration to more severe illness. If symptoms occur, call a doctor immediately.

For more information, visit www.fsis.usda.gov.