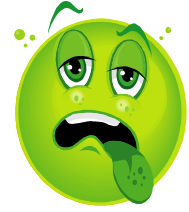


Is What You're Eating Making You Sick???



Remember that stomach "flu" you had last month? Well . . . your symptoms were most likely caused by a **Foodborne Illness**. There are many types of germs (including bacteria, viruses and parasites) that can be passed via food and cause symptoms like headache, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. You may even contract a cold or the flu (which is a **respiratory** illness caused by influenza viruses) if your food has been handled by someone who is infected with a virus. We often blame the last thing we ate for making us sick; but it can take as little as 30 minutes OR as long as 14 days to experience symptoms after consuming contaminated food or water.

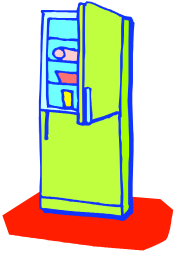
Foodborne illnesses are extremely common. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate that there are 76 million cases of these illnesses each year in the U.S. The good news is that most foodborne illnesses are **not** life threatening; however, the symptoms are often unpleasant and may cause you to miss school, work and other activities. Most symptoms pass within 24 - 48 hours; **you should see your medical provider if you have bloody diarrhea, you have a stiff neck, fever and a headache or if symptoms last more than 3 days.**

It is as easy to contract a foodborne illness from foods prepared and eaten at home as from those prepared in a restaurant or convenience store. You can't see, smell or taste most of the germs that cause foodborne illnesses. To minimize your risk of foodborne illness you should handle, store and cook foods properly and **wash your hands often**. Read on for some simple food safety guidelines . . .

- ❖ **Keep your hands and your kitchen clean.** All surfaces (dishes, counter tops, cutting boards, utensils, etc.) that touch your food should be washed with warm, soapy water before AND after contact with food. Wash your kitchen towels and dishcloths often & avoid using sponges. Juices from raw meats and poultry carry bacteria which can be easily transferred to other foods so always use **clean** plates, utensils and cutting boards for raw produce and cooked foods.



WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN!



- ❖ **Store foods at a safe temperature.** Perishable foods like meat, poultry, fish, dairy products & some produce items should be kept refrigerated (at or below 40°F). Take food straight home after grocery shopping or picking up take-out meals and refrigerate immediately.

Perishable foods should not be kept at room temperature for more than 2 hours (limit to 1 hour in the summer heat).

Don't leave leftovers sitting on the counter and if you are bringing food to work or school be sure to use an insulated lunch box to keep foods chilled. Thaw meat, fish or poultry in the refrigerator, microwave or under cold running water and cook immediately. **DO NOT** thaw on the kitchen counter. See the chart on the following pages for cold food storage guidelines.

- ❖ **Cook foods adequately.** High heat kills harmful bacteria. If you don't already have one, buy yourself a food thermometer and use it when cooking or reheating meats, poultry, egg dishes and casseroles. When microwaving - cover food, stir and rotate the dish once or twice for even heating; bacteria can survive in cold spots. Never accept undercooked ground beef or poultry at a restaurant; hot foods should be hot and cold foods should be cold. See the chart on the following pages for cooking temperature guidelines.



If you have questions or concerns about food safety, go to:



The Fight BAC! Web site at www.fightbac.org

Gateway to Government Food Safety Information at www.foodsafety.gov

The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service at www.fsis.usda.gov