

# NUTRITION NEWS

WRITTEN BY: SHANNON DAVIS, RD, CDN

LAYOUT BY: LAEKEN FOX

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## Summer Food Safety



Summer is here! Time for picnics, barbecues, and cook-outs. Unfortunately, this also coincides with an increase in foodborne illness outbreaks!

A foodborne illness is a disease that is transmitted to people by the food they consume. People who are at increased risk of contracting a foodborne illness include pregnant women, individuals whose immune systems are weakened, and the elderly population. While people may contract a foodborne illness at any given time, an outbreak is defined as an incident in which two or more people experience similar symptoms resulting from the consumption of the same food.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) estimate that every year, one in six people will contract a foodborne illness. And 3,000 people die every year from foodborne illnesses. Bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi can all contaminate our food supply. Bacteria, however, are the most common form of foodborne illness.

There are a number of factors that affect how bacteria can grow and multiply. These include the food that is being consumed (different bacteria can thrive in different food sources), the acidity of the food, the length of time the food is kept at an unsafe temperature, the temperature itself, the food's exposure to oxygen, and the moisture content of the food (generally, the higher the moisture content, the faster the bacteria can grow.)

While most bacteria can grow and multiply at temperatures between 45 degrees F and 140 degrees F, bacteria thrives at temperatures between 70 and 120 F. This is important to keep in mind if you are serving foods in the summer, especially at an outdoor event where access to refrigeration may be limited.



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COMMON FOODBORNE PATHOGENS	2
PREVENTING AN OUTBREAK	3
SUMMER LASAGNA	4

### Monthly Exercise:

#### Wall Push Ups

Place your hands flat against a blank wall.

While keeping your hands flat and your elbows bent at a ninety-degree angle lower yourself towards the wall until your nose is almost touching it.

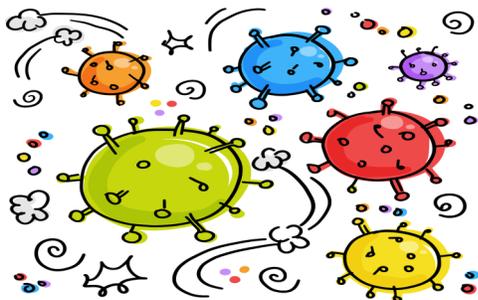
Then slowly push yourself back until you are standing up straight.

There are a number of bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses. Here is a summary of some of the more common types, the typical foods that harbor them, and what symptoms to look for.

**Salmonella:** Sources of salmonella include animal products, poultry, and eggs. Common symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, and malaise. Remember to cook chicken and poultry to 165 degrees F, refrigerate raw poultry, and store eggs properly.

**Staphylococcus:** Typical foods involved include baked goods, custards, pastries, ham, sliced meats, and foods with low water activity. Symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, and malaise. To prevent infection, do not use bare hand contact when handling foods that are not going to be cooked (as humans are a direct mode of transmission). Also always practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing.

**Campylobacteria:** This is found in meats, including chicken, turkey, beef, liver, milk, and water. Symptoms include diarrhea (often bloody), severe abdominal pain, fever, anorexia, malaise, headache, and vomiting. Prevention includes thoroughly cooking meat, poultry, and poultry products. Also, be sure to only use milk that has been pasteurized.



**Listeria:** Listeria can come from the soil, infected animals, or infected humans. It can also be transmitted in contaminated water. Foods involved include unpasteurized dairy products, raw vegetables (usually contaminated from the soil they have been grown in), poultry, raw meats, and cheeses. Symptoms of a listeria infection include low grade fever, flu like symptoms, stillbirths in pregnant women, meningitis, and encephalitis. Listeria infections can be fatal. Always cook foods to the minimal acceptable temperature. Use only pasteurized milk and dairy products. Thoroughly wash raw vegetables before consumption. Be sure to clean and sanitize all surfaces in your food preparation area.

**Botulism:** Botulism is commonly found in home canned food products. It can also be found in smoked and vacuum packaged fish, garlic that is stored in oil, and baked potatoes. Symptoms start out as gastrointestinal (such as diarrhea and vomiting) but then progress to neurological symptoms, such as vertigo, blurred or double vision, dry mouth, difficulty swallowing and breathing, muscular weakness, and respiratory paralysis. This illness can also cause fatalities.

**E. Coli:** E. Coli has been prevalent in the news in recent years. It is commonly found in ground beef that is insufficiently cooked. It can also be found in fresh produce and unpasteurized milk. Symptoms include diarrhea (often bloody), severe abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, chills, and more severe kidney issues in children. E. Coli infections can also be fatal. Be sure to always cook ground meat to at least 158 degrees F. Also be sure to use only pasteurized milk and milk products. Practicing good hygiene, including frequent hand washing, can also greatly reduce the transmission of E. Coli bacteria.

Food safety starts right in the kitchen. From purchasing to preparing to serving and storing food, your methods and practices can affect your likelihood of contracting a foodborne illness. Here are some suggestions for good practices every step of the way!

- ◆ When shopping, select frozen foods and perishable foods last, such as meat or fish. Always have these products put in separate plastic bags so that their drippings don't contaminate other foods.
- ◆ Don't use food from flawed containers that leak, bulge, or are severely dented. Don't taste food that has a foul odor or spurts liquid when the can is opened.
- ◆ Purchase only pasteurized milk and cheese.
- ◆ Purchase only the amount of produce needed for a week's time. The longer you keep your fruits and vegetables, the more time available for bacteria to grow.
- ◆ When purchasing pre-cut produce, avoid those that look slimy, brownish, or dry; these are signs of improper holding temperatures.
- ◆ Thoroughly wash hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling food. This practice is especially important when handling raw meat, fish, poultry, or eggs.
- ◆ Make sure counters, cutting boards, dishes, and other equipment are thoroughly cleaned and rinsed before use.
- ◆ If possible, cut foods to be eaten raw on a clean cutting board reserved for that purpose. Then clean this cutting board using hot, soapy water. If the same board must be used for both meat and other foods, cut meats last. The USDA recommends cutting boards that are made of easy-to-clean, nonporous materials, such as plastic, marble, or glass. All cutting boards should be

replaced when they become streaked with hard-to-clean grooves or cuts, which may harbor bacteria. All cutting boards should be sanitized once a week in a solution of 2 teaspoons bleach per quart of water.

- ◆ When thawing foods, do so in the refrigerator for 1-3 days, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Also, marinate foods in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Carefully wash fresh fruits and vegetables under running water to remove dirt and bacteria clinging to the surface.
- ◆ Use refrigerated ground meat and patties in 1-2 days and frozen meat and patties within 3-4 months.
- ◆ When serving foods outside, keep them out of the direct sun to aid in controlling the temperature.
- ◆ Have a cooler ready with ice to store perishable foods in directly after serving. Keep the cooler in the shade or another cool, dark place. If the ice is melted when removing food from the cooler, do not use the stored food!
- ◆ Keep hand sanitizer around to use in case running water is not available. While less effective than washing your hands in hot, running water, it is a better alternative than not cleaning your hands at all!
- ◆ When in doubt, throw it out! If food has an "off" taste or smell, do not use it! It is better to play it safe when it comes to foodborne illnesses!

**Summer Lasagna**

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped carrots
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1(15 ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp dried basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 5 medium zucchini, sliced lengthwise into 1/4 inch thick strips

- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a medium baking dish.

In a skillet over medium heat, cook the ground beef evenly until brown. Drain juices. Mix the onion, green bell pepper, carrots, garlic, and tomato sauce into the skillet. Season with oregano, basil, salt, and pepper. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer 10 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

In the bottom of the prepared baking dish, layer 1/2 the zucchini strips. In a bowl, beat together the cottage cheese and egg, and spread over the zucchini. Scoop 1/2 the beef mixture over the cottage cheese and egg mixture, and sprinkle with 1/2 the mozzarella cheese. Layer with remaining zucchini, beef mixture, and mozzarella. Top with Parmesan cheese.

Bake 45 minutes in the preheated oven. Allow to sit 10 minutes before slicing to serve.



**HEAP**

If you received HEAP last year but have not yet received an application for this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

If you did not receive HEAP last year but want to apply this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

**HERKIMER COUNTY  
OFFICE FOR THE AGING**

109 Mary St., Herkimer, NY 13350

Phone: 315-867-1121

Fax: 315-867-1448

Email: [hcofa@herkimercounty.org](mailto:hcofa@herkimercounty.org)

Web: [www.herkimercounty.org](http://www.herkimercounty.org); then 'departments' then 'Office for the Aging'

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