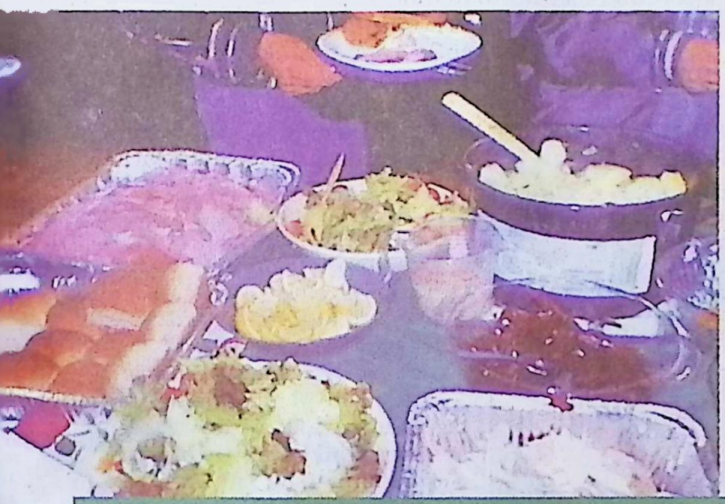
How can we protect ourselves from food borne illness

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WE know that food is the source of our energy. Everyday we eat and drink varieties of food items but seldom think about their safety and do not take necessary precautions. We can easily ensure food safety by proper handling and storage of food stuff and thus prevent food borne illness in the family. Careful handling, storage and cooking can save us from the attack of harmful bacteria which are not seen with bare eyes. In every step of food preparations the following guidelines may keep us safe from food borne illness.

Clean: Wash hands and food-contact surfaces. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get into cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops.



Separate: Don't cross-contaminate--don't let bacteria spread from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

Cook: Cook in proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food-borne illness.

Chill: Refrigerate promptly. Quick refrigeration of food keeps most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 4.4°C and the freezer at -17°C, and the accuracy of the settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer.

Cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards, utensils, etc., if they are not handled properly. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood. So keep these foods materials and their juices away from already cooked or ready-to-eat foods. Handling foods, it is important to be smart and keep foods apart to avoid cross contamination. By following these simple steps, you can prevent cross-contamination and reduce the risk of food-borne illness.

Shopping

Separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery-shopping cart. Place these foods in plastic bags to prevent dropping their juices onto other foods. It is also best to separate these foods from other foods at check out and in separate grocery bags.

·Purchase refrigerated or frozen items after selecting your non-perishables.

·Never choose meat or poultry of torn or leaking package.

·Do not buy food past "Sell-By," "Use-By," or other expiry dates.

·Avoid purchasing unpasturized juices, milk, cheeses, etc.

Storage

·Always refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours (1 hour when the temperature is above 32°C).

·Check the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer with an appliance thermometer. The refrigerator should be at 4°C or below and the freezer at -17°C or below.

·Cook or freeze fresh poultry, fish, ground meats, and variety meats within 2 days; beef, veal, lamb, within 3 to 5 days.

·Perishable food such as meat and poultry should be wrapped securely to maintain quality and to prevent meat juices from getting onto other food.

·To maintain quality when freezing meat and poultry in its original package, wrap the package again with foil or plastic wrap that is recommended for the freezer.

·In general, high-acid canned food such as tomatoes, grapefruit, and pineapple can be stored on the shelf for 12 to 18 months. Low-acid canned food such as meat, poultry, fish, and most vegetables for 2 to 5 years if the can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean, and dry place. Discard cans that are dented, leaking, bulging, or rusted.

Preparation

Wash hands and surfaces. Harmful bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, utensils, and counter tops. To prevent this:

·Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food, and after using the bathroom, changing diapers; or handling pets.

·Use hot, soapy water and paper towels or clean cloths to wipe up kitchen surfaces or spills. Wash cloths often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.