

FOOD RELATED ILLNESS

There are an estimated 11 to 13 million cases of food related illnesses in Canada every year. The summer months with the hot and humid weather provides the perfect environment for the rapid growth of Salmonella and E coli O157:H7 bacteria. The danger zone for this rapid growth of bacteria is from 4 degrees C to 60 degrees C (40 degrees F to 140 degrees F) Health affects from food related illness can vary from symptoms similar to a bad case of the flu, with severe stomach cramps, vomiting, fever and watery or bloody diarrhea occurring 2 - 10 days after contact with the bacteria and lasting 7 - 10 days. Some people experience life threatening symptoms like kidney failure, seizures, and stroke, while most will recover some are left with permanent health affects and some may die.

You can drastically reduce your risk of food related illnesses by following some common sense guidelines

WASH

1. Wash hands well for 20 seconds before handling food and after handling raw foods
2. Bacteria can live on the surface of fruits and vegetables so wash them well in clean water
3. Wash all plates, utensils, cutting surfaces that come in contact with raw foods before using them again for cooked foods

SEPARATE

1. When placing raw meat, poultry and or fish in the fridge or cooler be careful to securely wrap each separately and place in the bottom of the cooler or the bottom shelf of the fridge to prevent the juices from dripping onto other foods.
2. Use a separate cutting board and utensils for produce, raw meat, fish and Poultry



FOOD TEMPERATURE

1. Be sure of food temperature by using a digital thermometer. Visual cues like colour are no guarantee that food is cooked. Don't guess!!
2. Cooked foods are safe to eat when the internal temperatures are
 - 71 degrees C (160 degrees F) for ground beef
 - 74 degrees C (165 degrees F) for leftover food
 - 85 degrees C (185 degrees F) for whole chicken
3. Clean thermometer before using it again
3. Thaw foods in the fridge, cold water or microwave
4. Marinate foods in the fridge

STORAGE

1. Cooked meats, chicken, fish, potato salad, pasta salad and luncheon meat need to be kept cool at 4 degrees C (40 degrees F) to prevent bacteria from growing.
2. Place leftovers back in the fridge or cooler as soon as you are finished eating.

WHEN IN DOUBT THROW IT OUT!!

This may not be a complete list of guidelines for reducing your risk of food related illnesses.