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National Food Safety Education Month Promoting safe food handling tip

The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) and Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) are promoting September as National Food Safety Education Month. It's a great time to learn ways to promote safe food handling and prevent foodborne illnesses. It's important for people to understand how their behavior and activities contribute to the safety of food and how they can decrease the risk of foodborne illness, while also reducing food waste.

It is important to know that foodborne illness can result in more than just a few unpleasant days of fever and tummy troubles. It can also result in long-term effects and can even be deadly. In addition, some people are at a higher risk for developing foodborne illness, including pregnant women, young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems (such as transplant patients and individuals with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or diabetes).

"When cooking for family or for a party," said Eric Johnston, BLDHD Environmental Health Director "cutting corners can put your family and guests at risk for foodborne illness. By remembering to practice a few basic food safety principles, such as washing your hands before, during, and after handling food and using a food thermometer to be sure it is cooked to the proper internal temperature, you can help keep yourself and your family safe from a preventable illness."

To keep everyone safer from food poisoning, follow these four simple steps: clean, separate, cook, and chill.

1. **Clean:** Wash and sanitize hands, utensils, and surfaces often. Especially after handling raw meat products. Bacteria can spread and survive on hands, surfaces and food contact equipment.
2. **Separate:** Raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can spread bacteria to ready-to-eat foods. Keep them separate by using different cutting boards and utensils.
3. **Cook:** Use a food thermometer to check whether a meal has reached a safe internal temperature to kill any harmful bacteria.
4. **Chill:** Refrigerate perishable food within two hours. Plan to use or freeze your leftovers within four days. When reheating leftovers, heat to 165 F.

For more food safety information visit: <https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/safe-food-handling>

Media Contact:
Rachel Pomeroy, PIO
231-882-6085
RPomeroy@bldhd.org

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