



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**May is “Food Safety Month” at Livingston County
Department of Public Health**

Howell, Michigan, May 16, 2008 – With summertime quickly approaching and backyard barbecues and family picnics on the horizon, Livingston County Department of Public Health wants to take the opportunity to reinforce proper food handling and inform Michigan residents that food safety is not an option, but an obligation. Consumers need to know simple steps they can take to prevent foodborne illness.

“As the temperature rises, so does the risk of foodborne illness. Hot, humid weather creates the perfect conditions for the rapid growth of bacteria,” said Jim Henry, Food Program Supervisor, Livingston County Department of Public Health. “Summer also means more people are cooking outside at picnics, barbecues and camping trips, without easy access to refrigeration and washing facilities to keep food safe.”

To minimize the risks of foodborne illness, follow these four easy steps when handling and preparing food:

Step One – Clean

Wash hands and surfaces often to avoid the spread of bacteria.

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before handling food, and after handling raw meats or poultry, using the bathroom, touching pets or changing diapers.
- Always wash raw fruits and vegetables in clean water. You cannot tell whether foods carry surface bacteria by the way they look, smell or taste.

Step Two – Separate

Keep raw meats and poultry separate from cooked foods to avoid cross-contamination.

- When you pack a cooler for an outing, wrap uncooked meats and poultry securely, and put them on the bottom to prevent raw juices from dripping onto other foods.
- Wash all plates, utensils, and cutting boards that touched or held raw meat or poultry before using them again for cooked foods.

Step Three – Cook

Make sure you kill harmful bacteria by properly cooking food.

- Traditional visual cues like color are not a guarantee that food is safe. Don't guess! Take a digital instant-read food thermometer along to check when meat and poultry are safe to eat
Cooked foods are safe to eat when internal temperatures are:
 - 165° F for 15 seconds: poultry, stuffed products
 - 155° F for 15 seconds: hamburgers, sausage
 - 145° F for 15 seconds: pork, beef, fish, eggs
- Keep hot foods above 135° F

Step Four - Chill: Keep cold food cold.

- Perishable foods that are normally in the refrigerator, such as luncheon meats, cooked meat, chicken, and potato or pasta salads, must be kept in an insulated cooler with freezer packs or blocks of ice to keep the temperature at or near 4° C (40° F).
- Put leftovers back in the cooler as soon as you are finished eating.
- The simple rule is: When in doubt, throw it out.

For information about infectious disease prevention and services, visit www.lchd.org or call 517-546-9850.

Additional information about the “**Public Health – For Michigan. For You.**” slogan can be found at www.malph.org.

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