

Beware of Food Borne Illness in Your Home

Food borne illnesses show up in the news frequently. Recognizing what causes them, how to prevent them and understanding some common illnesses will help you stay safe.

Recognizing food borne illnesses can be difficult. Food can contain harmful bacteria that will not be noticed with smell or taste. They can cause illnesses from three days to two weeks and can be confused with other illnesses such as the flu. The two most common causes of food borne illnesses are improper holding temperatures and poor personal hygiene. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and cramps.

The Partnership for food safety education and Fight Bac are 2 groups focused on food safety. "Fight Bac" Has 4 basic rules to follow in the prevention of food borne illnesses. **Clean** hands, surfaces and raw products before eating. **Separate** raw meat, poultry and seafood making sure not to cross-contaminate. Wash utensils between and after all raw foods. Put all cooked foods on a clean plate. **Cook** meat and test with a meat thermometer to internal temperature of 160 deg., whole poultry to 180 deg, and fish should flake with a fork. Watch for cold spots when microwaving and reheat food to 165 deg.. **Chill** food within 2 hours of preparing. Keep the refrigerator no higher that 40 deg. For large amounts of leftovers, separate into smaller containers to quicker cooling.

People are at a higher risk for food borne illnesses when they have a low immune system. Two common illnesses are the Norovirus and E-Coli. The Norovirus may appear within 12-48 hours of exposure while E-Coli appear in 2-8 days. Both are spread through contaminated food. Rehydration is the best treatment for these illnesses.

Go to www.foodsafety.org , www.fightbac.org , or call 1-888-safefood for more information.