



Safe Food for the Hungry

A Newsletter for the Staff and Volunteers of Emergency Feeding Programs

Summer 2001



A New Food Safety Program Educates Pregnant Women and Their Young Children

*We will always wash our hands,
wash our hands,
wash our hands...*

These are the new words that preschoolers will be singing to the tune of *Mary Had a Little Lamb* after they have had a lesson on food safety from a new "Safe Food and You" curriculum hot off the press by the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service.

Most young children don't think about washing their hands unless an adult tells them to do it. After participating in this lesson, the children will be excited about washing their hands on their own while singing their new song. Mom will be able to help because the lessons are for her also.

Donna Vandergraff, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Coordinator, is the main author and contact person for this new curriculum. She received money from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to fund the creation and implementation of this curriculum. She has pulled together a group of educators and other creative people to help create a videotape, CD of songs, and lesson plans.

The curriculum is being taught through the EFNEP, the Family Nutrition Program (FNP), the Cooperative Extension Educators in Indiana, and the Cooperative



Dane Gray really gets into washing his hands during class.

Extension staff in Iowa.

The curriculum consists of one lesson adapted to preschoolers, pregnant women, or mothers with preschoolers that is between 30-60 minutes in length.

The videotape targets food safety education for pregnant women and covers the basics of food safety in a fun, easy to understand way. The viewer becomes involved in safely preparing food for a baby shower in a friend's house.

The lessons have been tested at various sites in Indiana. The class has been very well received with comments like:

"I liked the part about washing my hands with the oil stuff. It showed where you miss when you wash."

"I learned that lunchmeat can grow bacteria that is deadly to pregnant women and children."

"I plan to wash mine and Matthew's hands more."

These are just a few of the comments participants made about the class.

If you are interested in having someone present the "Safe Food and You" lesson to your group, contact your local county extension office.

Listeria Monocytogenes

(Just One of the Top Ten *Least Wanted* Germs in the Food You Eat)

You may have heard of the germ, *Listeria monocytogenes*, in the news as these bacteria can cause a serious infection in people.

Compared to other bacteria such as salmonella, few food borne outbreaks are attributed to *Listeria monocytogenes*. Despite its lower occurrence, it is one of the more deadly food borne germs contributing to an estimated 2,500 serious illnesses and 500 deaths each year.

If you were to take a closer look at this nasty germ under the microscope, you would see something that resembles a capsule with long, thin arms. This tiny capsule, invisible to the naked eye, can be found in soil, water, and foods.

Since *Listeria monocytogenes* is found in so many different places, foods must be handled carefully to keep the food free of these bacteria.

One of the places these bacteria have been found is on pre-cooked meats such as packaged luncheon meats and hot dogs. While being prepared at the food processing plant, these foods are cooked to a safe minimum temperature of 165° F for 15 seconds. Even with these safe procedures, the possibility exists for these foods to be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* after cooking or before packaging.

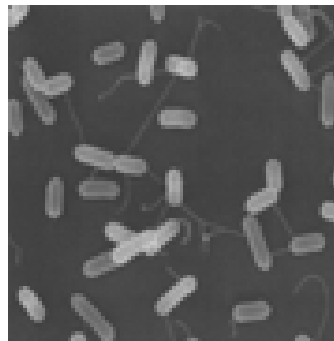
The challenge of keeping these bacteria under control is due to its ability to live under conditions otherwise deadly to other bacteria. *Listeria monocytogenes* can live at normal refrigerator temperatures of 41° F and can grow and multiply in refrigerators maintained at a temperature as low as 38° F.

Since *Listeria monocytogenes* is so hardy, it is difficult to completely eliminate it in food preparation and processing plants. Therefore, to reduce the risk of illness from *Listeria monocytogenes*, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is advising all consumers to:

- Use perishable items that are precooked or ready-to-eat as soon as possible.
- Clean refrigerators regularly.
- Use a refrigerator thermometer to check that refrigerators always stay at 40° F or below.

Some people are at higher risk for becoming ill from *Listeria monocytogenes*. These individuals include pregnant women, older adults, and those with a weakened immune system such as individuals diagnosed with AIDS or undergoing treatment for cancer.

The FDA advises this group to avoid foods that have a greater likelihood of containing *Listeria monocytogenes* or to reheat deli items or other pre-cooked meats until steaming hot (165° F for 15 seconds). These precautions will help insure an environment that will kill any *Listeria monocytogenes*, if present in a food.



Listeria monocytogenes

What foods have earned the *Listeria monocytogenes* caution signal?

For high-risk individuals, the foods listed below should be reheated to steaming hot prior to eating. If that is not possible, these foods should be avoided.

- Ready-to-eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, deli meats
- Smoked seafood
- Raw or unpasteurized milk
- Soft cheeses such as Feta, Brie, camembert, blue veined cheeses, and Mexican-style cheeses like “queso blanco fresco.”

What are the symptoms of a *Listeria monocytogenes* infection?

Since this bacteria takes a while to multiply in the body to the point where symptoms occur, the consumer may not notice any symptoms until 3 to 70 days after eating something infected with *Listeria monocytogenes*.

When symptoms occur, an infection may just look like the flu for most healthy people. Symptoms may be fever and chills, headache, tiredness, aches and pains, and diarrhea.

For those people at high risk, the infection is more severe and can result in hospitalization. Pregnant women who are in this high-risk group may experience miscarriage, fetal death, or severe illness.

Hot, Hot, Hot! Cook and/or Heat Foods To A Safe Temperature

Potentially hazardous foods need to be cooked and reheated to a safe temperature before they are served to patrons. By heating food to a safe temperature, any bacteria that may be in the food will be killed and the food will be safe to eat. Temperatures should be taken before serving to make sure that the food is safe to eat. Some of the temperatures required for common food products are below.

Safe-Cooking Temperature Chart

Food Product	Minimum Cooking Temperature
Beef/Pork	Rare-140° F for 12 minutes
Cooked beef/pork roasts	Medium Rare-144° F for 5 minutes
Ground beef	155° F for 15 seconds
Raw sausages	155° F for 15 seconds
Ready to eat sausages	165° F for 15 seconds
Poultry	165° F for 15 seconds
Eggs	155° F for 15 seconds
Fish filets	145° F for 15 seconds
Reheated food	165° F for 15 seconds
Soup	165° F for 15 seconds
Holding hot food	140° F

Source: Indiana Food Code, Title 410 IAC 7-20

Use A Thermometer To Obtain An Accurate Temperature Of Food Products

When taking the temperatures of a food item, use a thermometer that will read from 0° F - 220° F. By purchasing a thermometer with such a broad range of temperatures, it can be used to take the temperature of both hot and cold foods.

There are many different types of thermometers you can use. One common thermometer is called a dial thermometer. To take an accurate measurement with this thermometer, place the bottom shaft of the thermometer into the product up to the dimple in the shaft or so that the food covers $\frac{3}{4}$ of the shaft of the thermometer. There are temperature sensors along the shaft of the

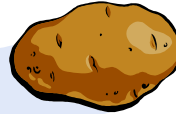
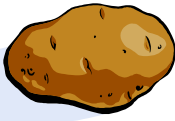


A dial thermometer is used to check temperatures.

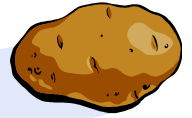
thermometer that measure the heat of the food product. Make sure it is not resting on the bottom or side of the pan. You want to find out the temperature of the food, not the pan!

If the probe is only in a small part of the product, then an inaccurate reading will result. Take a reading in several different places to make sure that the food is being heated evenly throughout the product. Hold the thermometer in the product for the required time to see if it reads at a safe temperature or higher for the entire time.

If your food reads at a safe temperature, then it is ready to serve. If it isn't quite up to temperature, then stick it back in the oven or keep on the range for a few more minutes and test it again later.



One Potato, Two Potato Three Potato More . . .



There will be lots and lots of dried potato flakes in the food pantries and kitchens this summer. Americans eat an average of 18 pounds of dehydrated potatoes a year. Dried potato flakes come from real potatoes and are most commonly used to make mashed potatoes. These flakes have some great nutrition packed into them. They are a good source of carbohydrates, vitamin C, and potassium.

Storing Potato Flakes

Dehydrated potato flakes should be stored in a cool dry place until used. They should be kept up off the floor and away from any rodents or insects. It is important to only take as much product as you can use in a reasonable amount of time.

Did You Know?

- Potatoes have been around since 200 B.C. when the Inca Indians in Peru grew them.
- Potatoes first came to the United States in 1621 when the governor of Bermuda sent two large chests of vegetables to Jamestown. Potatoes were included in these vegetables.
- In 1719, Irish immigrants were the first to grow potatoes in large patches in New Hampshire. This is where the first large-scale potato patch was started in North America.
- French fries were first introduced in America at the White House during Thomas Jefferson's term as president from 1801-1809.
- The potato has even been grown in outer space. In 1995, the potato was the first vegetable grown in space.

Frequently Asked Questions About Fresh Potatoes

Is it OK to eat the green part of the potato?

No, you should not eat the green part of the potato. Potatoes turn green when they have been stored in the light for a long period of time. Potatoes should be stored in a dark, cool, dry place. It is safe to cut the green part off of the potato and use the remaining part of the potato.

The potatoes I peeled a while ago are now brown and gray in color, are they still safe to eat?

Yes, they are still safe to eat. The color will go away after you cook the potatoes. If you want to keep them from turning color, then soak them in cold water after peeling and cutting them. They can be kept in cold water for up to two hours. After that time, they begin to lose some of their water-soluble nutrients.

How can I safely store fresh potatoes?

The ideal temperature to store potatoes is 40° F. Do not store potatoes in the same storage facility as apples, since the ethylene gas given off by apples will speed sprouting and rotting of the potatoes. Early sprouting indicates the storage temperature is too high or the potatoes are being stored with apples. Storage temperatures lower than 40° F tend to turn the starch in the potato to sugar and sprouting will also occur. Store the potatoes in crates or bins, piled no deeper than 12-18 inches.

Ways to Use Dehydrated Potato Flakes

Potato flakes can always be used as a thickener in foods with moisture. For example, you can use potato flakes in place of flour in a cream sauce to thicken it. They can also be used in any recipe that uses mashed potatoes. Below are some recipes to try using dehydrated potato flakes.



Breakfast Potato Pancakes

Makes 6 servings, 2 patties per serving

Instant mashed potato flakes or granules to make 3 cups prepared potatoes
4 ounces (about 1 cup) frozen potatoes, thawed and well-drained (O'Brien type potatoes work especially well)
3 Tbsp flour
4 slices bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled
1 green onion, sliced
1 egg, slightly beaten
Salt and pepper, to taste
Cornmeal

Prepare potato flakes as package directs to make 3 cups, omitting salt and decreasing liquid by 1/2 cup. Cool.

Combine mashed and frozen potatoes, flour, bacon, onion, egg, salt, and pepper. Mix to blend thoroughly. Form into 12 patties, about 1/4 cup each. Coat lightly with cornmeal.

Fry patties in lightly oiled non-stick skillet over medium heat until golden, turning once. Drain on paper towels. Serve warm with applesauce.

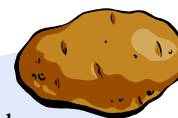
Note:

You can make the pancake mixture a day in advance. Store in covered container in refrigerator.

Recipe from Global Gourmet

Potato Soup Mix

Makes 6 servings



1 3/4 cups instant mashed potato flakes
1 1/2 cups dry milk powder
2 Tbsp chicken bouillon granules
2 tsp dried minced onion
1 tsp dried parsley
1/4 tsp ground white pepper
1/4 tsp dried thyme
1/8 tsp ground turmeric (optional)
1 1/2 tsp seasoning salt

Combine potato flakes, dry milk, bouillon granules, onion, parsley, pepper, thyme, turmeric, and seasoning salt in a bowl and stir to mix.

Pour into a 1 quart jar.

Attach the following instructions: To serve; place 1/2 cup soup mix in bowl. Stir in 1 cup boiling water until smooth.

Recipe from All Recipes™

Pan Pierogies

Makes 12 servings



4 onions, chopped
4 Tbsp butter
1 (16 ounces) package dry lasagna noodles
4 cups instant mashed potato flakes
16 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
1/4 cup butter

Preheat oven to 350° F. Butter the bottom and sides of a 9x13 inch baking dish.

Sauté onions in the butter until translucent and soft. Cook and drain lasagna as per package directions. Make potatoes as per package directions for 12 servings.

Combine the onions with the potatoes. Place a layer of noodles over the bottom of the baking dish. Cover with a layer of potatoes, sprinkle with cheese and pats of butter. Repeat, ending with noodles. Sprinkle top with cheese and butter. Bake at 350° F for 1 hour.

Recipe from All Recipes™

New Book!

Cooking for Groups: A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recently put out a guidebook called *Cooking for Groups: A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety*. This is a book that will be a good source of information for someone who is planning to feed a large group of people. The guide tells about the following:

- Planning and shopping
- Storing and preparing food
- Cooking foods to safe internal temperatures
- Safely transporting food
- Reheating food
- Keeping foods hot or cold during serving
- Safely storing leftovers

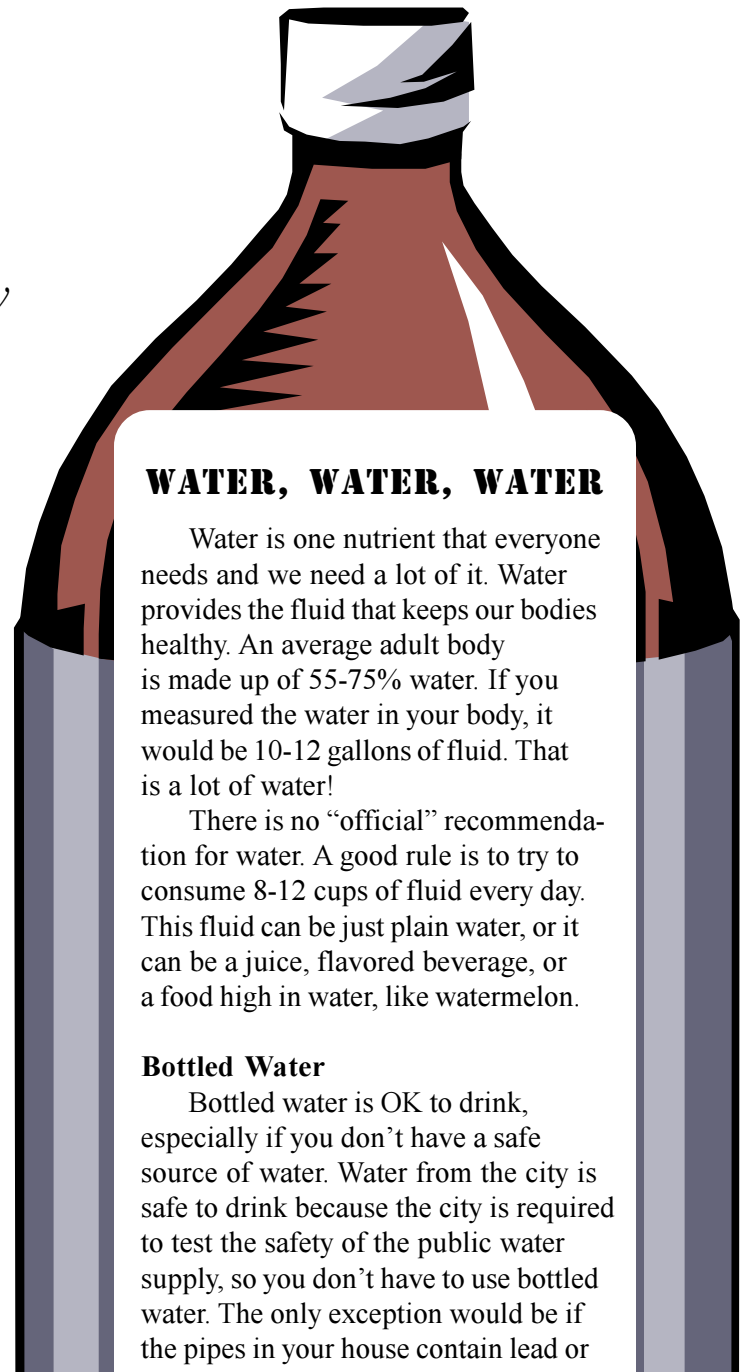
To obtain a copy of this book, you can look it up on the web at www.fsis.usda.gov. After logging onto the site, go to "Publications," then "Food Safety and Home Food Handling," and then look for the name of the publication.

Or you can obtain a hard copy of the book by writing to:

Federal Consumer Information Center
Item #604 H
Pueblo, CO 81009

A guidebook can also be ordered from the following website: www.pueblo.gsa.gov

After going to the above site, go to "FCIC's Consumer Information Catalog" and look for the title under the category of "Food." Follow the directions on the bottom of the screen to order the publication.



WATER, WATER, WATER

Water is one nutrient that everyone needs and we need a lot of it. Water provides the fluid that keeps our bodies healthy. An average adult body is made up of 55-75% water. If you measured the water in your body, it would be 10-12 gallons of fluid. That is a lot of water!

There is no "official" recommendation for water. A good rule is to try to consume 8-12 cups of fluid every day. This fluid can be just plain water, or it can be a juice, flavored beverage, or a food high in water, like watermelon.

Bottled Water

Bottled water is OK to drink, especially if you don't have a safe source of water. Water from the city is safe to drink because the city is required to test the safety of the public water supply, so you don't have to use bottled water. The only exception would be if the pipes in your house contain lead or another unsafe substance. Your local health department can help you find a lab to test your water. If you are using water from a well, the water needs to be tested yearly for bacteria and nitrates to make sure that it is safe to drink and has not been contaminated.

(1) F (2) e (3) e (4) d (5) F (6) a (7) F (8) b

Answers to temperature quiz on page 7.

Do You Have a Copy of the Indiana Food Code?

Every facility that stores, prepares, packages, or serves food is required to have a copy of the Indiana Food Code onsite at all times. If you have a computer and access to the Internet, the Indiana Food Code can be printed from the following web site: <http://www.state.in.us/isdh/regsvcs/foodprot/>

The local library may also have Internet access. If you do not have computer access, then contact your local health department to find out how to obtain a copy.

Don't Forget to Keep Food Cool and Dry!

Remember to keep a log of refrigerator and freezer temperatures. With the heat of summer, it is important to maintain cool temperatures. Refrigerators should be kept at 41° F or cooler and freezers should be at 0° F or cooler. These units should be checked periodically throughout the day to make sure they are working properly.

Don't forget about dry storage areas. Some food products can't stand high heat. When you leave for the weekend, make sure that these products are in a cool place or leave some air conditioning on.

Do you have something that you would like to share with others through the newsletter? It could be a successful event, or something unique that your facility does. If you would like to share, please contact Barb Nolan at 1-765-496-2975 or e-mail at bnolan@purdue.edu.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

HOW HOT IS HOT?

How well do you know your temperatures? Circle the correct letter for the right answer.

Answer bank:

- a) 140° F
- b) 140° F for 12 minutes
- c) 144° F for 5 minutes
- d) 145° F for 15 seconds
- e) 155° F for 15 seconds
- f) 165° F for 15 seconds

1. What is the minimum cooking temperature for reheating leftover food?
a b c d e f
2. What is the minimum cooking temperature for ground beef?
a b c d e f
3. What is the minimum cooking temperature for bulk scrambled eggs?
a b c d e f
4. What is the minimum cooking temperature for baked fish?
a b c d e f
5. What is the minimum cooking temperature for chicken?
a b c d e f
6. At what temperature is it safe to hold food?
a b c d e f
7. What is the minimum cooking temperature for soup?
a b c d e f
8. To what temperature should you cook a rare beef roast?
a b c d e f

(Answers are on page 6)

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Food Safety Questions?

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This newsletter is created by the Cooperative Extension Service staff in the Department of Foods and Nutrition at Purdue University, with funding from a Community Foods and Nutrition Block Grant administered by the Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family and Children, Housing and Community Services Section.

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