

Chicken is the food most likely to kill you, study warns

(NaturalNews) Chicken is the food most likely to kill you, while salad greens are the food most likely to make you sick, according to a new study conducted by the U.S. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

Fortunately, the Home Food Safety program has responded to this study by issuing guidelines on good sanitation practices that can dramatically reduce your risk of food-borne illness without requiring you to cut any foods from your diet.

"While this study found produce accounted for nearly half of food poisoning illnesses, everyone should still eat plenty of fruits and vegetables," dietitian Rachel Begun said.

"Safe food-handling procedures can help protect you from food-borne illnesses while still allowing you to enjoy these tasty and nutritious foods."

Begun is a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, which along with ConAgra Foods is behind the Home Food Safety program.

Food-borne illness (known colloquially but inaccurately as "food poisoning") is caused by eating food contaminated with disease-causing bacteria or viruses. One in six people suffers from food-borne illness in the United States each year, leading to 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.

How to stay healthy

Begun offered a variety of suggestions on how to prevent the spread of food-borne illness.

"One of the most important things you can do to stay healthy is to wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water, especially when it comes to the particularly nasty norovirus," Begun said.

"The norovirus accounted for 46 percent of the illnesses according to this study, and while hand sanitizer is great to reduce the spread of some germs, research shows us that soap and water is best."

Consumers should purchase meat products that are tightly wrapped and feature the Safe Food Handling label, Begun said. Meat should be the last item you purchase while shopping, and should be bagged separately from other foods to prevent cross-contamination.

All meat products should be stored in the coldest part of a refrigerator set to a maximum of 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Raw chicken, ground meats, organ meats and sausage should be consumed within two days of purchase, and other meats within four. Cooked meat should be frozen or consumed within four days.

Safe handling of meat is also important in preventing illness. Meat should be defrosted in the refrigerator or microwave, never on the counter, then cooked immediately. A separate cutting board should be designated only for use on raw meat, to prevent cross-contamination, and you should always wash your hands for at least 20 seconds after handling raw meat products.

All raw fruits and vegetables should be washed in cool tap water before eating, including those with peels. Any visibly damaged sections should be cut away and discarded, as should the outer leaves of lettuce. After washing, produce should be dried with a paper towel or a clean cloth.

More food safety tips (such as safe temperatures for cooking meat) are available at: (www.homefoodsafety.org), and an app for mobile devices can also be downloaded. The site also features a downloadable Hand Washing Maze for children.