

News Release

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Take extra care when eating outdoors this summer

As the weather warms up, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland residents are encouraged to take extra care when preparing and cooking food outdoors to avoid food poisoning.

During National Food Safety Month, NHS Leicester City and NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland is providing advice to residents on how to prepare and cook food safely when having barbecues, outdoor parties and preparing picnics this summer.

Karen Smith, head of infection control speaking on behalf of both trusts, said: "As soon as the sun comes out and the weather is nice enough we all like to get in the garden and have a barbecue or take a picnic outside.

"People should take extra care when handling raw meat outside and ensure they are cooked through thoroughly and that juices run clear. Simple steps like washing your hands before and after touching raw meat, cooking meat thoroughly and keeping food cool, preferably in a fridge right up until the moment it needs to be used, will help to reduce your chances of getting food poisoning."

You can follow Karen's top tips below:

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water before and after handling raw meat, going to the bathroom and after coughing and sneezing to avoid the spread of germs
- Wash surfaces when cooking and keep raw food separate to cooked food. Keep marinated food in the refrigerator, cook food thoroughly and refrigerate or freeze food promptly
- Never leave food out for more than one hour when the temperature is above 90 F. At any other time do not leave food out for more than two hours
- Wash off fruits and vegetables with cool running water and dry thoroughly
- When you are packing food for a picnic, place cold food in a cooler with plenty of ice packs. Cold food should be held below 40 F and the cooler should be stored in the shade. Hot food should be wrapped well, placed in an insulated container and kept at or above 140 F.
- Use disposable wipes to clean your hands if you don't have access to hand washing facilities

Karen added: "In most cases of food poisoning, you can treat the symptoms (the most common symptoms are nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea) at home without needing a doctor. Dehydration is a risk because fluid is lost through vomiting and diarrhoea so the most important thing is to make sure you do not become dehydrated as this will make you feel worse and slow your recovery time."

Most cases of food poisoning do not require medical attention but you should contact your GP or telephone NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 if you have any of the following symptoms:

- vomiting that lasts for more than two days
- you cannot keep liquids down for more than a day
- diarrhoea that lasts for more than three days
- blood in your vomit
- blood in your stools
- seizures (fits)
- changes in mental state, such as confusion
- double vision
- slurred speech
- signs that you may be dehydrated, such as a dry mouth, sunken eyes, and being unable to pass urine

If you are more vulnerable to the effects of dehydration (for example, this includes the very young and elderly or have a pre-existing condition i.e. diabetes) then you may need to seek medical advice.

For further advice call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47. Or visit:

www.hpa.org

www.nhs.uk

www.food.gov.uk

www.eatwell.gov.uk

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For interviews or more information please contact press officer Liz Thomas on 0116 295 4123 or liz.thomas@leicestercity.nhs.uk or Caroline Higgs, senior media officer on 0116 295 7663 or caroline.higgs@lcr.nhs.uk