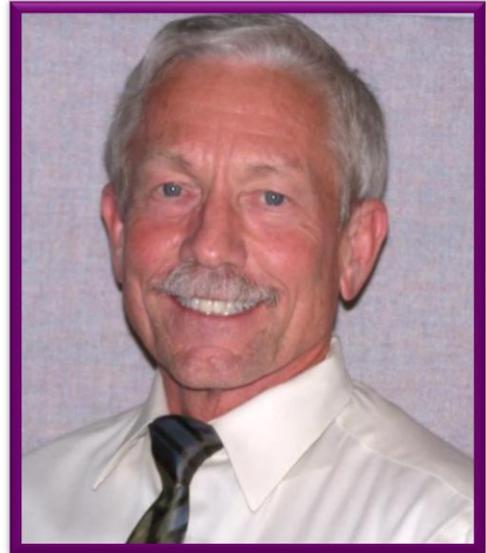


To *Your* HEALTH *Fresno County*

Bringing you public health issues and ways to improve personal, family, neighborhood and community health



Food Borne Illness

July 17, 2014

As the summer progresses, we turn to a public health issue that has particular impact during these warm months. That issue is foodborne illnesses. These illnesses remain a daunting public health challenge, especially because foodborne illness can be prevented.

Foodborne illnesses are caused by eating food which has been contaminated with viruses, bacteria, toxins, or parasites.

Each year, 1 in 6 Americans gets sick from a foodborne illness and 3,000 die.

Symptoms of foodborne illness are often attributed to “stomach flu” and these symptoms may include diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, abdominal cramps, fever, joint aches, and fatigue. They may occur within minutes after eating the contaminated food or as long as weeks after ingestion of the offending agent. The symptoms can range from mild to life threatening. Individuals at particular risk for serious illness or death include infants, older adults, and those with weakened immune systems.

A wide variety of fresh foods frequently harbor organisms which can cause foodborne illness. The opportunity to ingest these organisms or their toxins may occur in several ways: 1) when these fresh foods are improperly prepared or cleaned; 2) when food containing these organisms comes into contact with other foods; or 3) when foods are not adequately cooked. Organisms can also be spread to food by persons who have been infected with foodborne illness organisms and who then handle or prepare food for others.

A recent study conducted by the University of California at Davis and published in Food Safety News on July 7, 2014, reveals that many safe food preparation practices are overlooked even by those who consider themselves to be well-informed on food safety.

Visit this link to learn more about the [UC Davis study and its results](#).

How can we best protect ourselves and others from these preventable illnesses?

As individuals and families, we can know and follow the basic guidelines of CLEAN, SEPARATE, COOK, and CHILL published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. To learn more about these four basic guidelines and view instructional videos, click [here](#).

We can also be aware of the symptoms of foodborne illnesses. Be sure to contact your health care provider for any diarrhea lasting longer than three (3) days or when diarrhea is accompanied by high fever, blood in the stool, or so much vomiting that liquids cannot be kept down and very little urine is passed.

As retailers, we can follow these very same CLEAN, SEPARATE, COOK, and CHILL guidelines. Additionally, we can assure that our food handling employees are excluded from those duties when they are ill and for 48 hours after their symptoms resolve.

As educators, we can assure that our students are aware of this important public health issue and how best to protect themselves using the information described above.

As public officials, the responsible federal, state, and local agencies should work closely with food producers and retailers to ensure a safe and healthy food supply.

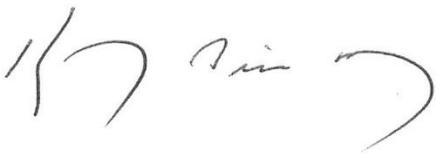
As health care providers, we can continue to be aware of these foodborne illnesses and how they present in our patients, and treat these illnesses appropriately. We need to remember that almost all of them must be reported to the Fresno County Department of Public Health (FCDPH), especially when they occur as outbreaks, using a Confidential Morbidity Report which can be found at: <http://www.fcdph.org/CMR>
Additionally, we can take every opportunity to educate our patients on steps to take to protect themselves from these illnesses using the information described above.

As community leaders, we can determine how foodborne illnesses impact the health of our community and make a commitment to work with FCDPH as well as with members of the community to identify and implement strategies which could reduce or eliminate negative effects.

Contact us and let us know how our public health department can support you in promoting healthy changes in your neighborhood.

E-mail me at ToYourHealth@co.fresno.ca.us.

Here's to your health!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Bird". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Dr. Ken Bird, Fresno County Interim Health Officer