



NEWS RELEASE

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Safer Food Selections for Diabetics and Others

Many people are much more susceptible to food poisoning and don't even know it. Young children, pregnant women, older adults, and those with compromised immune systems are particularly vulnerable. You are at increased risk if you suffer from liver disease or alcoholism, if you have decreased stomach acidity (due to gastric surgery or the use of antacids), or if you have a compromised immune system due to: steroid use; conditions such as AIDS, cancer, or diabetes; or treatments such as chemotherapy.

In addition to taking precautions against food borne illness at home, you need to be careful when you are away from home too. Here are four easy steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones when you are selecting foods that are ready to eat at a restaurant, delicatessen, take-out counter, or grocery store.

Be Aware of Raw or Undercooked Foods

Foods from animals such as meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, and eggs when eaten raw or undercooked sometimes contain harmful viruses and bacteria that can pose a risk of food borne illness.

To reduce your chances of food borne illness you should stay away from:

Raw fish or shellfish —oysters, clams, sushi, sashimi, ceviche

Meat or seafood ordered undercooked such as "rare" hamburger, beef, lamb, pork, or fish.

Eggs ordered undercooked and food with uncooked egg ingredients—such as "runny" fried or poached eggs; dressings or sauces such as hollandaise, homemade mayonnaise, and Caesar salad dressing; desserts like chocolate mousse, meringue pie, and tiramisu.

Ask About Preparation

Recipes vary. If you're not sure whether a ready-to-eat item contains undercooked ingredients, ask how the food is prepared.

Request that Food be Thoroughly Cooked

If the item you are interested in selecting contains raw or undercooked meat, fish, shellfish, or eggs, ask if that ingredient can be eliminated. If the food is prepared to order, ask for it thoroughly cooked.

Make a Different Choice

With certain foods, such as oysters on the half shell or an egg-based mousse, it may be impossible to accommodate your request for thorough cooking. In that case, simply choose something else. It is a minor inconvenience compared to the major problems caused by food borne illness.

To learn more about food borne illness and ways to prevent it, talk to your health care professional or your local health department, or visit the www.FoodSafety.gov web site.

Source: U. S. Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition November 2000