

MEDIA RELEASE

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Food safety tips for the festive season

DARLING Downs Hospital and Health Service Public Health Director Dr Penny Hutchinson is using the start of the summer season to remind residents to be mindful of food safety risks.

Dr Hutchinson said a food-safe festive season could be ensured if a few simple tips were followed.

“It is important to handle food safely to avoid a bout of food poisoning,” Dr Hutchinson said.

“Food poisoning can make you seriously ill, or even be fatal in some circumstances.

“Knowing how to cook and prepare food properly ensures that food does not become contaminated and that potentially harmful organisms are killed or stopped.

“No one wants to spend the festive season feeling sick so there are some simple things you can do to prevent food poisoning.

“Store food below five degrees or above 60 degrees. The range between those temperatures is where you have the potential for bacteria to multiply.

“If anything has been left out of the fridge for more than two hours, throw it out.

“Never use the same chopping board for raw meat and salad vegetables.

“And store meat on the bottom shelf of the fridge to avoid the meat contaminating other food,” Dr Hutchinson said.

The Food Safety Information Council estimates there are 5.4 million cases of food borne illness in Australia each year.

Food poisoning, on average, results in 120 deaths, 1.2 million visits to doctors, 300,000 prescriptions for antibiotics and 2.1 million days of lost work each year.

Tips for a food safe festive season

- Wash your hands with soap and water before eating and preparing food, after handling raw foods, using the toilet, handling animals, smoking, blowing your nose, washing surfaces and disposing waste.
- Keep hot foods hot (above 60 degrees) and cold foods cold (below five degrees).
- Any food left out for a period of two hours or more should be discarded. “If in doubt throw it out”.
- Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meat/poultry and ready-to-eat foods.

- Cook meats, chickens and eggs thoroughly before eating. Do not eat or drink foods containing raw eggs.
- Wash raw fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Always defrost frozen foods in the refrigerator or the microwave, not on the kitchen bench.
- Do not re-freeze food once defrosted.
- Take care with foods prepared for infants, the elderly and the vulnerable.
- Avoid handling food if you are unwell.
- Wash hands, kitchen work surfaces and utensils (especially cutting boards and blenders) with soap and water immediately after they have been in contact with raw meat or poultry.
- Do not leave food or dirty dishes out on benches and keep the kitchen clean.

Ends

Photo caption: Dr Penny Hutchinson is encouraging residents to be food safe this festive season.

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