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Don’t let dodgy food spoil your festive fun!

If in doubt, throw it out!

That’s the message from Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) when it comes to preparing and storing food during the summer festive season.

Manager Environmental Health, Peter Dyer encouraged people to take extra care to ensure spoilt food did not spoil Christmas.

“We all enjoy eating, drinking and being merry over the holiday period, celebrating with family and friends with outdoor eating and entertaining,” Mr Dyer said.

“However, over the busy Christmas period, gastroenteritis is one of the main causes for presentations to SCHHS emergency departments.

“Unfortunately, bacteria in food multiply even faster in hot, humid weather and this can cause food poisoning. Common symptoms of food poisoning include vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain, though there can be others depending on the cause.

“Very often the food that makes us sick looks, smells and tastes normal. It may take up to three days or longer after eating contaminated food to become sick.

“The good news is that nearly always, food-borne illness can be easily prevented,” he said.

The following simple rules can prevent food poisoning from spoiling your Christmas entertaining fun:

- Washing your hands particularly before handling or eating food
- Keep the kitchen clean
- Handle food safely
- Raw foods should always be handled and stored separately from cooked and ready-to-eat foods
- Cook high-risk foods (mince, burger patties, sausages, rolled roasts, stuffed meats, seafood and poultry) thoroughly
- Keep hot food hot (> 60°C or above until served)
- Keep cold food cold, that is, in the refrigerator or freezer.

To find more information on food safety, including web links, visit the Food safety matters website at: [http://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/environmental/food/index.html](http://www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/environmental/food/index.html)

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Media contact: Naomi Ford | 5202 0078

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