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**FDA ADVISORY**

No. ~~2013~~ 059

**Subject: PRACTICAL TIPS TO REMEMBER TO PREVENT FOOD BORNE DISEASE AND OUTBREAKS IN COMMUNITIES IN TIMES OF CALAMITIES AND DISASTERS**

The risk of food borne disease and outbreaks in communities hit by calamities and disasters is real. Food borne disease outbreaks have the greatest potential to claim as many lives as the disaster itself. Food and drinking water are common sources of pathogens and are good vehicle for spreading infectious diseases.

In times of disasters, affected communities should strive hard to practice high standard of hygiene and high level of sanitation in the midst of confusion, commotion and chaos. Physical, chemical and biological food hazards, like pathogens from human and animal fecal wastes and industrial wastes, toxicants and chemicals, must be prevented from contaminating the communities' food supplies and sources.

The community are advised on the following:

- a) to obtain their food and water supplies from reliable sources and donors or to purchase foodstuffs from reliable suppliers;
- b) to store food under appropriate storage conditions to prevent growth of pathogens that can spoil the food early and away from pests, such as mice and rats that can also act as vectors for transmitting diseases shared by man and animals;
- c) to throw all types of trash and wastes generated at home or in relief centers in proper containers for proper disposal;
- d) to supervise contact between infants/children and pet animals, like cats and dogs, in relief and evacuation centers where hygiene and sanitation are poor; and
- e) to report any sign and symptom of illness immediately to public health workers.

Mothers with infants should breastfeed their babies at all times, as this is the only way to ensure that they get safe and nutritious food. Never prepare infant formula under unhygienic and unsanitary condition. Boiled water and sterilized spoons should be used when preparing milk substitutes. Infant milk formula in relief and evacuation centers should be used only under the strict supervision or advise of public health workers.







All food handlers are advised to observe the following:

- a) wash hands before, during and after handling food;
- b) prevent contaminating food via table surfaces and cooking utensils;
- c) separate cooked foods from raw foods when preparing a meal;
- d) make sure that food is cooked very well, i.e. all parts have reach at least 70°C; limit exposure of food to room temperature, i.e. serve the food as hot as possible; cooked food should be kept hot above 60°C to avoid bacteria from multiplying and producing toxins before they are eaten;
- e) freeze and chill raw food from the market as soon as possible to temperatures below 5°C, but avoid overfilling the refrigerator and any fluctuations of refrigerator temperature by wrapping raw food in individual containers according to the amount needed when cooking each meal;
- f) avoid cooked food from direct or indirect contact with raw food and non-potable water;
- g) reheating food after it has cooled for several hours is not a good practice as there are food borne pathogens, like *Staphylococcus aureus*, that may be killed during reheating but the toxins are still there since they are not heat-labile;
- h) never touch with hands or contaminate with saliva while preparing food; and
- i) never prepare food when suffering from diarrhea and skin diseases.

Farmers should remember the following to ensure safe agricultural produce:

- a) Livestock and poultry animals may pass on food pathogens directly to people and indirectly through fecal contamination of food and water sources and supplies.
- b) Farm vegetables and fruits that have been submerged in floods should be assessed for human consumption as it may be contaminated with animal fecal wastes and industrial wastes and chemicals.
- c) Keep post-harvest and storage equipment and facilities clean and dry at all times.

Finally, all consumers and food handlers should remember the WHO Five Keys to Safer Food:

1. Keep clean.
2. Separate raw and cooked.
3. Cook thoroughly.
4. Keep food at safe temperatures.







Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**



5. Use safe water and raw materials.

For more information and clarification, please contact us via [info@fda.gov.ph](mailto:info@fda.gov.ph).

  
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