

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clark County Health District Issues Warning for Safe Food Handling

(Las Vegas, Nev. – May 17, 2000) – With the onset of warm weather more people are barbecuing and enjoying fresh produce such as melons. While many people are familiar with the hazards of eating undercooked meat the Health District is reminding people that illnesses such as salmonellosis can be contracted from eating contaminated produce.

Melons are produced in a large number of domestic and foreign growing areas. As with most raw agricultural commodities produced in or on soil, a small percentage of the produce may be contaminated with bacteria or parasites on their surfaces. Intact skins or rinds of fruit and vegetables protect the interiors from contamination. However, pathogens may be introduced when cutting or preparing the produce.

Daniel Maxson, an environmental health supervisor for CCHD, states that, “Fresh melons and produce should always be cleaned appropriately before consumption. The rind of whole melons such as cantaloupes should be vigorously scrubbed to remove surface soil and then rinsed in tap water.

When slicing melons always use clean and sanitized knives and cutting boards. The rind should be removed and cut cantaloupe maintained at or below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Melons with damaged or cracked skin should not be consumed.

(more)

Safe handling guidelines for meat and poultry include ensuring that raw items are stored at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Cooked poultry and meat should be held at 140 degrees. These items should never be defrosted at room temperature and cooked foods should never be placed on a plate that held raw meat. After handling raw animal items, hands and utensils should always be washed thoroughly in hot soapy water before further preparation of foods.

The center of patties and meat loaf should not be pink and the juices should run clear before serving. Ground meat patties and loaves are safe when they reach 160 degrees Fahrenheit in the center, and ground poultry patties and loaves are safe when they reach 165 degrees.

For more information regarding safe food handling contact CCHD's Environmental Health Division at 383-1251.

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