Ohio | Department of Agriculture

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE FROM *E. COLI*

Ohio Department of Agriculture Experts Provide Guidelines to Prevent Illness, Outbreak

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (June 3, 2011) – Due to the recent outbreak of *E. coli* O104:H4 in Germany, Ohio Department of Agriculture officials are providing food safety guidelines for Ohio consumers. Officials do not expect the German strain to become a problem in the United States, however the following consumer tips are always beneficial for avoiding foodborne illnesses.

How to Help Prevent an E. coli Illness

- Bacteria multiply rapidly between 40 °F and 140 °F. To keep food out of this danger zone, **keep cold food cold and hot food hot**.
  - Group food together in the freezer – this helps the food stay cold longer.
  - Store food in the refrigerator (40 °F or below) or freezer (0 °F or below).
  - Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.
  - Cook all raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal to an internal temperature of 160 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
  - Cook all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
  - Maintain hot cooked food at 140 °F or above.
  - When reheating cooked food, reheat to 165 °F.
- Drink only pasteurized milk, juice, or cider.
- Prevent cross-contamination of food by separating raw foods from ready-to-eat foods.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables under running tap water, especially those that will not be cooked.
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap after changing diapers, using the bathroom, or handling pets.

In Case of Suspected Foodborne Illness

- **Preserve the evidence.** If a portion of the suspect food is available, wrap it securely, mark "DANGER" and freeze it. Save all the packaging materials, such as cans or cartons. Write down the food type, the date, other identifying marks on the package, the time consumed, and when the onset of symptoms occurred. Save any identical unopened products.
- **Seek treatment as necessary.** If the victim is in an "at risk" group, seek medical care immediately. Likewise, if symptoms persist or are severe (such as bloody diarrhea, excessive nausea and vomiting, or high temperature), call your doctor.
- **Call the local health department** if the suspect food was served at a large gathering, from a restaurant or other food service facility, or if it is a commercial product.

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E. coli is a bacteria that lives in your intestines. Although most types of *E. coli* are harmless, some types can make you sick. The worst types of *E. coli*, including the O104:H4 strain, cause bloody diarrhea and can sometimes cause kidney failure and even death. People can become exposed to *E. coli* from undercooked beef, especially hamburger, unpasteurized milk and juice, raw fruits and vegetables, soft cheeses made from raw milk, feces of infected people and contaminated water. Symptoms include diarrhea that is often bloody, abdominal pain and vomiting. Usually, little or no fever is present. Symptoms can begin two to eight days after consumption of contaminated food or water and last about five to seven days.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.foodsafety.gov, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service

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