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September is Food Safety Education Month

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), an estimated 1 in 6 Americans gets sick from eating contaminated food. During National Food Safety Education Month the Iroquois County Public Health Department encourages you to learn how to keep you and your loved ones safe by taking steps to prevent food poisoning.

Washing your hands, cleaning utensils, and maintaining a clean environment for cooking are key factors in preventing the spread of bacteria. Washing vegetables under running water is another easy way to prevent food contamination.

While prepping, cooking, serving and storing, make sure utensils that were used with uncooked meats are not cross contaminating ready-to-eat foods. While serving food, having separate utensils for all food items is the safest way to prevent a mix up and prevent cross contamination. Remember to keep it clean, keep it separate, and keep it safe.

Cook fish, meat, and poultry, completely without interrupting the cooking process; an interruption could allow bacteria to grow. Be sure that meats are cooked to the proper temperature by checking with a clean thermometer several times throughout the cooking process. Young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those who are ill or immunocompromised should not eat raw or undercooked animal products unless they have consulted their physician.

Plan ahead! If you know what is on the menu before the big day, be sure to check temperatures and cooking times for your items. Also, know the correct reheating and cooling process if food is being cooked more than 12 hours ahead of time. The "Danger Zone" of food temperature is between 41° F and 135° F. These temperatures have been found to be the most conducive to the growth of bacteria. We recommend serving, cooling, or reheating to be done in shallow containers that will carry the food through the "Danger Zone" safely.

For more information regarding food safety, contact the Iroquois County Public Health Department at **815.432.2483** or visit the ICPHD website at <http://www.co.iroquois.il.us/health-department/>