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## **Wise Notes for Consumers**

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### **Salmonella - A Summertime Bug You Don't Want!**

Don't get bugged by a foodborne illness this summer. Did you know that foodborne food illnesses increase during summer months? It's true, diseases caused by eating contaminated food rise during the warmer months due to warmer temperatures and poor food handling practices.

Rebecca Dittmar, Extension Program Specialist with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Food and Nutrition Unit provides a closer look into Salmonella, one of the major sources of foodborne illnesses each year. Salmonella can be found in a variety of foods including meat products, vegetables, eggs, sprouts, and in processed foods. Foods that are affected tend to look and smell fine, therefore making it hard to tell if it is contaminated.

Salmonella illnesses can be serious and are more dangerous for certain individuals. Symptoms typically appear within 6 to 48 hours after ingestion and often last 4-7 days. Many people recover without the use of antibiotic medications. However, some individuals are at a higher risk of contracting the illness, such as the elderly, infants, and individuals with weakened immune systems. In these individuals, symptoms can be more severe causing a more serious health risk. It has been noted that for every one case of Salmonella that is confirmed, there are about 29 more cases that go

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unreported/not confirmed. As noted, most individuals can fight this illness without seeking medical treatment. Consequently, they are not submitting samples for testing, so no one learns what made that individual sick.

Remember, warmer weather helps create ideal conditions for Salmonella growth. When eating outdoors this summer, it is important to keep perishable foods cold until consumption and refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours of being set out (1 hour if the temperature is above 90°F). Avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs and egg products. Be aware of who will be in attendance at your next summer cooking experience and always remember to handle/cook/store foods properly. For additional information on preventing foodborne illnesses contact the Extension office at 940-627-3341.

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