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Contact: Lauren

Buzzelli

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(850) 245-4111

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH) ISSUES FOOD SAFETY REMINDERS
AS
EASTER AND PASSOVER MEAL CELEBRATIONS APPROACH**

TALLAHASSEE – As families gather this season to share traditional meals and participate in activities for Easter and Passover celebrations, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) offers Floridians advice on how to safely avoid foodborne illnesses.

When preparing some of the popular holiday dishes that contain eggs and other ingredients, make sure to follow these steps for illness prevention:

Clean hands – Always wash hands before and after food preparation with water and soap, especially when handling raw animal products, such as eggs.

Separate - Beware of cross-contamination. Wash kitchen equipment between uses, in hot, soapy water, before and after food preparation. Keep raw meat and poultry apart from cooked foods.

Cook – Cook eggs until the yolks are firm. Do not eat uncooked batter containing raw eggs. Cook casseroles like lasagna, macaroni and cheese, and other egg dishes, as well as desserts like cheesecake to an internal temperature of at least 160° F. When cooking meat, like ham and beef brisket, use a food thermometer to make sure meat reaches a safe internal temperature of 145° F. Turkey should be cooked to 165° F.

Chill – Refrigerate eggs and egg-containing foods. Do not leave perishables at room temperature for more than two hours.

Like all perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood and produce, eggs used during Easter egg hunts need to be properly handled. It is important to cook eggs thoroughly and use a food thermometer to make sure egg-containing foods reach a safe internal temperature. Families should also follow these additional precautions:

If you intend to eat hard boiled Easter eggs:

- Discard eggs that are cracked or dirty
- Only use eggs that have been refrigerated
- Fully cook eggs by placing a single layer of eggs in a saucepan. Water should be at least one inch above the eggs in the pan. Cover the pan, bring the water to a boil, and carefully remove the pan from the heat. Let the eggs stand for 18 minutes for extra large eggs. Allow eggs to air cool rather than running them under water by placing them in an uncovered container in the refrigerator (see http://www.fightbac.org/spring_fact.cfm for more egg cooking tips)
- Use food grade dyes
- Don't let eggs sit in room temperature more than two hours

- Keep cooked eggs fully chilled on a shelf inside the refrigerator

Handling Baby Birds Given As Gifts Can Cause Illness

Parents should think twice before giving baby birds for Easter. Live chicks and ducklings can carry *Salmonella* which can make young children, the elderly and immune compromised people severely ill. Common symptoms of *Salmonella* include diarrhea, fever and stomach pain beginning one to three days after being exposed. Additional possible symptoms include nausea, chills, headaches and general achy feeling.

To prevent salmonellosis:

- Do not handle the birds. Do not let children under five years of age handle baby chicks or other young birds. Keep children from coming into contact with packages in which chicks or ducklings arrive.
- Clean hands: If people touch chicks, ducklings or the birds' environment, make sure that they wash their hands immediately afterwards. Pacifiers, toys, bottles or other objects should not touch the baby birds or their cages. If these objects do become contaminated, wash them with warm soapy water.
- Do not eat or drink around the birds. Do not allow anyone to eat or drink while interacting with birds or their environment. Keep the bird area separate from areas where food and drink are prepared or consumed. Do not allow chicks or ducklings on table surfaces or places where food will be prepared or eaten.

For more information on foodborne illnesses and diseases carried by pets and other animals, please visit the following Web sites:

Spring Facts: http://www.fightbac.org/spring_fact.cfm

Why parents should think twice before giving baby birds:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/easter_chicks.htm

DOH promotes and protects the health and safety of all people in Florida through the delivery of quality public health services and the promotion of health care standards. For more information regarding disease prevention, please visit www.doh.state.fl.us.

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