Family Living Focus

by Margaret R. Malehorn Cumberland Co. **Extension Agent**



Healthy Kids: Eat Safe Food

Harmful microorganisms that get into food and cause disease is called foodborne illness. Some foodborne illnesses have symptoms like an upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea. Others are more serious and make people very sick. Children are especially at risk from foodborne illnesses because their immune systems are not fully developed. A growing number of children are responsible for preparing their own food at home, thus

putting them at risk of contracting a foodborne illness from their own mishandling of food.

Ask your children, "What is a germ?" Remind them that a germ is a tiny life form that we cannot see. Germs are every where: in the air and on surfaces. They like things dirty, not clean. By keeping things that touch food clean, we can reduce the chance that germs will get into food. Important ways to keep food safe include these tips:

• Wash hand often. Wash hands before eating, before pre-

paring food, after a sneeze or cough, and always after using the restroom. Wash hands after taking out the garbage, playing outside, or playing with pets. Use warm water and make a soapy lather. Rub hands together while counting to 20. Wash both the top and bottom of each hand, and between the fingers too. Use finger tips to make circles in the palm of the other hand to clean under nails. Rinse hands in clean water and use a clean paper towel to dry your hands. Recent data suggests that proper hand washing and good personal hygiene can significantly reduce the spread of the common cold and flu too.

• Keep things clean. Make sure the table and countertop is clean before food is prepared or eaten. Emphasize that pets, shoes, and other dirty things should not be allowed on the tables or countertops. Use clean plates, glasses and utensils when eating or preparing food.

Explain to children to be sure all meat, poultry and eggs are free of harmful microorganisms, they must be cooked to be a safe temperature. Children should not eat batter or dough that contains raw eggs. When asked to think of ways people can avoid getting sick, remind them to not share drinks with another person, prepare food when sick, or when there is an open wound on the hand. Food tasters should use a clean spoon and then put it with other utensils to be washed, not back into the food. Always avoid "double dipping," when someone eats a part of a chip or vegetable and then dips again.

September is National Food Safety Education Month, and as millions of students head back to school with homemade lunches, a few reminders to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. School lunches can be safely made ahead of time, the night before, and kept cold either in the refrigerator or the freezer. Pack a freezer gel pack as a cold source to keep deli meats, poultry and egg sandwiches cold in an insulated box. Store the carried lunch away from heat sources such as direct sunlight or room radiators.

No leftovers! Just as important as safely preparing and storing a school lunch, is to know when to throw it out. If the sandwich is not finished, don't try to carry it home. The freezer gel won't hold all afternoon, not even in an insulated box.

Hot foods such as soup, chili, or stew, should be kept piping hot in an insulated bottle. Add hot water to the insulated bottle. let it stand for a few minutes. then empty and fill with hot

For more information about safe school lunches or food safety, call the extension office in your county, or contact the Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. You can also find more food safety information on the Web at www.fsis.us-

DEP, Penn State Cooperative Extension Team Up To Offer Composting Workshops

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Co.) — Department of Environ- erative Extension are teaming up mental Protection (DEP) Secreto offer composting workshops tary James M. Seif announced and free backyard composting bins to York County residents.

"It is vital for all Pennsylvanians to recycle more of the waste we produce so the com-

monwealth can meet its goal of recycling 35 percent of all waste generated," Seif said. "This cooperative effort between DEP and Penn State Cooperative Extension is an exciting opportunity for residents to learn about nature's own way of recycling. Plus, composting at home is something everyone can do to help reduce the amount of waste going to a landfill."

Penn State Cooperative Extension of York County is holding workshops on backyard composting this fall. "We must continue to find more efficient and economical ways to recycle our resources if we are to become a truly sustainable society," said Bob Steele, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences at Penn State University. "We are committed to helping Pennsylvania's citizens meet these goals through our research and extension programs."

Each person who preregisters and attends a workshop taught by a master composter, will receive a free composting bin as long as supplies last. The 45-minute workshop is repeated at 5 p.m., 6 p.m., 7 p.m., and 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19, at the County Annex Building, 112 Pleasant Acres Road, York in meeting room 2. Choose only one time slot to attend. For directions, call (717) 840-7408. To receive a bin, you must preregister by calling Penn State Cooperative Extension at (717) 840-7408.

"I strongly encourage everyone to attend one of these workshops to learn about compost-Seif said. "Biodegradable waste, such as banana peels, grass clippings, leaves and even coffee grounds, will break down into compost. You can spread compost over gardens, lawns, and flowerbeds to add nutrients to the soil. This is literally recycling in its purest form.



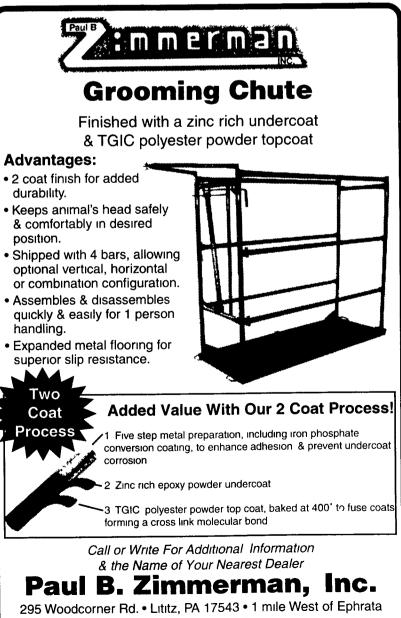
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