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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**STOP FOODBORNE ILLNESS RELEASES CRITICAL PRECAUTIONS FOR OLDER ADULTS  
IN TIME FOR FOOD SAFETY MONTH IN SEPTEMBER**  
*National Food-Safety Advocate Group Offers Safe Food Tips*

CHICAGO (Aug. 24, 2015) – As September’s National Food Safety Month approaches, STOP Foodborne Illness ([www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org)), the leading national advocate for safe food, is urging older adults to follow a number of important food-safety practices to avoid getting sick. Older adults have increased vulnerability to foodborne illness for several reasons: they typically have decreased stomach acid (the body’s natural defense from foodborne bacteria) or they may have a weakened immune system from an underlying illness such as diabetes, kidney disease or from undergoing cancer treatment. Two foodborne illness pathogens in particular, *Listeria* and *Vibrio*, cause more illnesses for older adults than any other age group. Older adults need to be especially careful when consuming foods that are likely to be contaminated with these bacteria.

“Most people don’t realize that their natural defenses to foodborne pathogens decrease as they age,” said Darin Detwiler, Sr. Policy Coordinator of STOP Foodborne Illness. “If you’re older than 65, taking precautions can help save you from suffering from an illness that you might have been able to fight off even a few years ago.”

Darin himself experienced the personal tragedy of foodborne illness when he lost his young son to *E. coli* O157:H7 poisoning from contaminated ground beef in 1993. Since then, Detwiler has been a tireless advocate for food safety, who is an FDA Certified Food Science Educator recognized by four different Secretaries of Agriculture for his efforts in consumer education, and served two appointments on the USDA’s National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection.

## **STOP Foodborne Illness - Safe-Food Guidelines for Older Adults 65+**

- **Cook eggs to 160°F.** *Salmonella* can grow both inside and outside eggs. The safest practice is to cook all eggs to 160°F or until the yolk is hard and egg has set. To further reduce risks, wash hands thoroughly after handling eggs. For those who like eggs runny or who eat uncooked eggs in foods like raw dough, eggnog, or homemade Caesar dressing, buy pasteurized shell eggs or liquid pasteurized egg products.
- **Heat lunchmeat and hotdogs to 165°F.** *Listeria* is a bacterium that can be found in ready-to-eat foods, such as lunchmeat. Although the majority of the population can resist *Listeria*, those more vulnerable may become sick and pregnant women can suffer miscarriages as a result of eating *Listeria*-contaminated ready-to-eat foods. To reduce the risk of *Listeria*, heat cold cuts and hot dogs to 160°F, and order hot sandwiches in restaurants.
- **Avoid raw fish.** Raw fish and shellfish can be a source of pathogens, including a particularly harmful one, *Vibrio* which is most often found in raw seafood items, such as oysters. Some *Vibrio* illnesses can be fatal, especially in patients with liver disease and the immunocompromised. Avoid raw fin fish, such as raw fish found in sushi, plus other raw shellfish such as oysters and scallops.
- **Drink pasteurized juices.** Most juices are pasteurized, but some may not be. Unpasteurized juices can contain harmful bacteria, but should be easy to steer clear of because they are required by law to carry a warning label. When buying smoothies, ask the preparer if they use pasteurized juice. If they aren't sure or say no, it's best to skip it.
- **Cook to safe temperatures.**
  - Burgers/Ground Meat (Except poultry) - **160°F**
  - Grilled Chicken & Other Poultry Products (like Turkey Burgers) - **165°F**
  - Whole cuts of Meat, Including Pork - **145°F AND LET REST 3 MINUTES**
- **Avoid cross contamination.**
  - Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and produce
  - Wash hands with soapy water
  - Sanitize surfaces, such as countertops, where raw meat and poultry have been

For National Food Safety Month, STOP Foodborne Illness also is offering food safety tips for school-age children, pregnant women, and mothers with young children. For more food

safety tips please visit [www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org). If you think you have been sickened from food, please contact STOP Foodborne Illness' helpline (1-800-350-STOP) which helps foodborne illness victims navigate the health system to figure out what they have, where it might have come from, and what to do next.

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### **About STOP Foodborne Illness**

STOP Foodborne Illness (STOP) is a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens. STOP achieves its mission by advocating for sound public policies, building public awareness and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness. [www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org).