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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STOP FOODBORNE ILLNESS' TIPS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MOMS
HOW TO REDUCE RISK FOR FOOD SAFETY MONTH IN SEPTEMBER
Highly Susceptible Population Requires Additional Food Safety Measures

CHICAGO (Aug. 24, 2015) – Pregnant women and young children have increased vulnerability to foodborne pathogens, so STOP Foodborne Illness (www.stopfoodborneillness.org), the leading national advocate for safe food, is releasing a list of food safety tips in time for September's National Food Safety Month to help soon-to-be and new mothers get a healthy start. Darin Detwiler, Sr. Policy Coordinator of STOP Foodborne Illness, knows firsthand the devastation of foodborne illness when he lost his young son to *E. coli* O157:H7 poisoning in 1993.

“A foodborne pathogen that doesn't affect the majority of the population can be much more dangerous to a pregnant woman or young child,” said Detwiler, who is an FDA Certified Food Science Educator recognized by four different Secretaries of Agriculture for his efforts in consumer education, and having served two appointments on the USDA's National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection, “A few precautions when choosing and preparing food, plus knowing what to do if you or your child becomes sick, can actually save lives.”

STOP's Safe-Food Guidelines for Pregnant Women and Young Children (under 5 years old)

- **Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk and cheeses.** Most are pasteurized, but read the labels, particularly on soft cheeses such as feta, Brie, Camembert, Roquefort, blue-veined cheeses, and Mexican-style soft cheese such as queso fresco.
- **Refrigeration Safety.** The safest refrigerator temperatures are below 41°F. Avoid keeping ready to eat foods for more than one week.

- **Put a hold on sushi.** Decreased immunity during pregnancy and in young children makes raw fish and raw shellfish unsafe to eat.
- **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.
- **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 meats to safe temperatures.** Ground beef should be cooked completely through to 160°F – color is not a reliable indicator so use a thermometer to be sure. At restaurants, order hamburgers cooked to 160°F. Chicken and turkey should be cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit and whole cuts of meat, including pork, should reach an internal temperature of 145 degrees Fahrenheit and left to rest for 3 minutes prior to serving (this rest period is needed to finish the cooking process).
- **Wash vegetables, avoid sprouts.** Choose fresh produce that looks undamaged, and rinse thoroughly in drinkable water to remove visible soil. Avoid raw sprouts such as alfalfa, radish and others altogether; uncooked sprouts have caused frequent outbreaks of *Salmonella* and *E. coli*.

Symptoms: Hard to Detect, Intense Effects

Foodborne illness symptoms can be harder to detect in pregnant women because they may be confused with typical pregnancy symptoms like nausea, or they may appear weeks after

contaminated food has been eaten. In young children, foodborne illness symptoms can intensify quickly; it's important to know the source of such illnesses to receive the right treatment.

Listeria causes the following symptoms in pregnant women:

- Mild flu like illness
- Fever
- Muscle Aches
- Nausea
- Diarrhea

Untreated infections can lead to premature delivery, spontaneous abortion, and still birth. It is important to seek medical attention if foodborne illness is suspected. Infants born to a mother with *Listeria* are at risk for sepsis or meningitis.

Other foodborne illnesses to watch for include:

Salmonella , which can cause:

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal cramps
- Vomiting

Pathogenic *E. coli*, which can cause:

- Severe diarrhea that is often bloody
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Usually there is little or no fever present

If consumers think they or their children have been sickened by food, seek immediate medical attention, especially if symptoms persist or worsen. STOP offers a free helpline (1-800-350-STOP) which helps foodborne illness victims navigate the public health system to figure out what they have, where it might have come from, and what to do next. For National Food Safety Month, STOP also is offering food safety tips for school-age children and seniors. For more food safety tips please visit www.stopfoodborneillness.org.

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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.