Baby Boomers and Food Safety

About 1 in 6 Americans will get food poisoning each year. Older adults are at an increased risk of serious complications from foodborne illness. A few simple steps can help keep the golden years pleasant for you or older adults you help care for.

What May Make You Sick?

Here's a look at some of the most common food pathogens that affect older adults and where they're found:

- **E. coli O157:H7**
  - Undercooked ground beef, unpasteurized milk and juices, contaminated raw fruits and vegetables, and water
  - Person-to-person contact

- **Campylobacter**
  - Unpasteurized (raw) milk
  - Raw or undercooked meat, poultry or shellfish
  - Untreated or contaminated water

- **Salmonella**
  - Raw or undercooked eggs, poultry or meat
  - Unpasteurized (raw) milk or juice
  - Cheese and seafood
  - Fresh fruits and vegetables

Why Are You at Risk?

Older adults are at elevated risk for hospitalization and death from foodborne infections. Why?

- Medication side effects (like a weakened immune system)
- Changes in functioning of organs like liver and kidneys
- Underlying chronic conditions (such as diabetes or kidney disease)
- Age-related changes to GI tract

Product Dating

Dates printed on food labels indicate when items will no longer be at peak quality. Dates are not for safety. Here's what each one means:

- **“SELL BY” DATE:**
  - Buy the product before this date. It is safe to eat after this date.

- **USE BY/ BEST IF USED BY:**
  - This is the last date recommended for best flavor or quality.

To learn more visit www.fsis.usda.gov and search “product dating.”

Foods to Avoid

- **Soft Cheeses** made from unpasteurized milk (feta, brie, Camembert, blue-veined and queso fresco)
- **Raw or Undercooked Meat, Poultry, Eggs or Seafood**
- **Unpasteurized (raw) Milk**
- **Unwashed Fresh Vegetables**
- **Hot Dogs, Deli Meats, and Luncheon Meats** that have not been heated to steaming hot
- **Pates** — unpasteurized/refrigerated pates

Safety Tips

The pathogens that cause foodborne illness can’t be smelled or tasted. Proper food handling of the food you bring home is your best defense against food poisoning. With all foods, follow these tips:

- **Clean:** Clean surfaces, utensils and hands with soap and warm water.
- **Separate:** Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from ready-to-eat foods in your grocery-shopping cart, refrigerator, and during meal prep.
- **Cook:** Cooked food is safe only after it’s been heated to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Use a food thermometer.
- **Chill:** Chill raw and prepared foods promptly if not consuming after cooking.