



# The Englewood Health Watch

## El Observador de Salud de Englewood

a Newsletter Published by the Englewood Department of Health

Nelson Xavier Cruz, MS, MBA  
Director, Health Services / Health Officer



Vol 4 No 1

### Fall 2010

September / October / November

#### Thawing the Holiday Turkey Safely

Immediately after purchasing, take that frozen turkey home and store it in the freezer. When it comes time to begin thawing that turkey for your holiday dinner, it should not be thawed on the back porch, in the car trunk, in the basement, or on the kitchen counter. A frozen turkey is safe indefinitely while frozen, but as soon as it begins to defrost, any bacteria that may have been present when the turkey was frozen can begin to grow again.

Improper thawing results in the center of the turkey still being frozen while the outside of the turkey reaches temperatures that are dangerous because of the bacterial growth that can occur. There are three safe ways to thaw that frozen turkey:

1. In the refrigerator. When thawing a turkey in the fridge you will need to plan ahead. For every 5 lbs. of turkey, allow 24 hours of thawing time in a refrigerator at 41° F. The following are examples of safe thawing times:

8-12 lbs ----- 1-2 days

12-16 lbs ----- 2-3 days

16-20 lbs ----- 3-4 days

20-24 lbs ----- 4-5 days

2. In the Microwave. Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for thawing in the microwave, and plan on cooking the turkey immediately after thawing in this manner.

3. Thawing in Cold Water. Allow about 30 minutes per pound when thawing a turkey in cold water. Keep the turkey in its leak proof packaging and submerge the turkey in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. Typical thawing times using this method would be:

8-12 lbs ----- 4-6 hrs

12-16 lbs ----- 6-8 hrs

16-20 lbs ----- 8-10 hrs

20-24 lbs ----- 10-12 hrs

Have a safe and healthy holiday dinner.



#### The Truth about MRSA

The truth about Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) may surprise you. MRSA is a type of bacteria that causes skin and other kinds of infections. Sometimes called "the superbug", MRSA is resistant to certain antibiotics, but several antibiotics still work. Many times, antibiotics aren't even needed—doctors are often able to treat MRSA skin infections by simply draining them. Because skin infections caused by MRSA are increasing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a new campaign to educate families about MRSA. Although most of these skin infections are mild, some infections may become life-threatening. The following are a few simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from MRSA skin infections.

*Step 1:* Know the signs and symptoms of MRSA and get treatment early. MRSA, usually appears as a bump or

infected area on the skin that may be red, swollen, painful, warm to the touch or full of pus or other drainage. It is especially important to contact your health care provider if these signs and symptoms are accompanied by a fever.

*Step 2:* Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered. This will help prevent spreading bacteria to others. If you think the area is infected, contact your healthcare provider and follow their instructions about proper care of the infection. Be sure to discard used bandages in the trash.

*Step 3:* Encourage good hygiene such as cleaning hands regularly. Bacteria and other germs are often spread from person to person by direct contact—mostly by our hands. Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing a bandage or touching infected skin.

*Step 4:* Discourage sharing of personal items such as towels and razors. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, washcloths, razors, or clothing that may have had contact with infected skin or soiled bandages. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Water temperatures for household laundry depend on the type of fiber or fabric of the clothing. In general, wash and dry in the warmest temperatures recommended on the clothing label. Use a clothes dryer to dry clothes completely. For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/MRSA](http://www.cdc.gov/MRSA).

#### Carbon Monoxide

Carbon Monoxide is called the "silent killer". It is difficult to detect, as it is colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Because you can't see, taste or smell it, carbon monoxide can kill you before you know it is there. With the winter season just around the corner, experts are warning residents to get their furnaces inspected by a professional. The most common reason for carbon monoxide poisoning from household furnaces is lack of maintenance. Any fuel burning appliance, vehicle, tool or other device has the potential to produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide gas.

Examples of carbon monoxide producing devices commonly in use in or around your home include fuel fired furnaces (non-electric), gas water heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves, gas stoves, gas dryers, charcoal grills, lawnmowers, snow blowers and other yard equipment (non-electric), and automobiles. There are carbon monoxide detectors available that are easy to install in your home. Most plug right into an electric outlet or use batteries. A detector will warn you in an event that there is a carbon monoxide leak in your home. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include:

- \* Flu-like symptoms
- \* Headache
- \* Dizziness
- \* Weakness or clumsiness
- \* Blurry vision
- \* Fatigue
- \* Loss of consciousness

If you have a carbon monoxide detector and the alarm goes off remember the following:

- Treat all alarms as the real thing.
- Leave the house immediately.
- Leave the door open on the way out.
- Call the fire department from a neighbor's house.
- Get medical help.
- Do not return to the house until inspected by a professional.

## Safe Holiday Food Handling

As the holidays approach we often think of large home-cooked meals that become the center of attraction for most family gatherings. To keep that food and meals safe, please follow these safe food handling tips:

**Clean:** Wash hands and counter surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen quickly. Cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops need special attention.

**Separate:** Don't cross contaminate by allowing bacteria from one food to spread to another food. Pay particular attention to raw poultry items contaminating ready to eat foods.

**Cook:** Proper cooking temperatures are important. Make sure the turkey and the stuffing reach at least 165° F to kill off bacteria that can cause illness. Use that meat thermometer.

**Chill:** Refrigerate promptly. This will keep bacteria from growing and make those left-overs last longer. If you have any questions, please contact one of our health inspectors with the Englewood Health Department at 201-568-3450, 201-871-6510, or 201-871-6514.

## Major HIV Breakthrough

July 18-23 marked the 18th International AIDS Conference. This year, it was held in Vienna, a city that played a central role in bridging Eastern and Western Europe. AIDS 2010 sought to promote scientific excellence and inquiry, encourage individual and collective action, foster multisectoral dialogue and constructive debate. The sessions focused on the latest issues in HIV science, policy and practice, key research findings, lessons learned, best practices, and identification of gaps in knowledge.

On Monday July 19, a South African husband-and-wife team, professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, presented a study showing the effectiveness of an anti-HIV vaginal gel. This big leap in HIV treatment was conducted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The ARV-containing gel lowers HIV incidence rate by 39% overall, but by 54% among those women who adhered most to it in the clinical trial group. It could save more than 800,000 lives and prevent 1.3 million new HIV infections during the next two decades in South Africa alone.

The clinical trial was conducted in South Africa and involved 900 women. The drug component of the gel, "Tenofovir", trade name Viread, belongs to a class of antiretroviral drugs known as nucleotide analogue Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (nRTIs), which block reverse transcriptase, an enzyme crucial to viral production in HIV-infected people.

Tenofovir is an antiretroviral drug used to treat people already infected with HIV. The gel must be applied up to 12 hours before and shortly after having sex to be most effective. The International Partnership for Microbicides, one of the non-profit groups that hold the license for producing tenofovir, estimates that the cost for one dose will cost less than one dollar!

### *A Tool to Empower Women*

A senior scientist at the CAPRISA research institution and study co-author, professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, said: "this new treatment has the potential to alter the course of the HIV epidemic, especially in southern Africa where young women bear the brunt of this devastating disease". This new tool allows women to 'take control'. It is not 100% effective and it is to be used in combination with other preventive tools such as condoms to be fully effective.

This discovery has the potential to change the course of the HIV pandemic. The results must be validated in a wider third phase clinical trial going through the process of assessing the new medication for safety and effectiveness.

## 'Whooping Cough'/Pertussis Epidemic

On Monday July 19, public health officials in California made the population aware of an epidemic in the state, urging elderly adults, children, and pregnant women to get vaccinated against pertussis/whooping cough. As of July 16, a total of 289 cases have been reported for the year, compared with 156 reported cases last year.

Pertussis/Whooping cough is a highly contagious upper-respiratory disease caused by a bacterium called *Bordetella pertussis*. Since the 1980s, there has been an increase in the number of reported cases of pertussis in the United States, especially among adolescents 10 to 19 years of age and babies less than 6 months of age.

### *Symptoms*

*Bordetella pertussis* causes a serious respiratory disease in infants, children, and adults. The disease starts like a regular common cold with runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, fever, and a hacking cough at night. After 1 to 2 weeks, children with the disease have bursts of rapid, consecutive coughs followed by deep high-pitched inspiration (whoop).

### *Transmission*

Pertussis usually spreads through respiratory droplets while coughing or sneezing. People breathe in the bacteria if they are close contact with the diseased individual.

### *Prevention*

The best way to prevent pertussis is to get the DTaP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis) vaccine at 2, 4, 6 months of age respectively. Three doses are needed to ensure adequate immunity; although, one or two doses will provide some protection against the disease. Parents must make sure that their infants receive the recommended doses on time.

Boosters containing tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis for adolescents and adults are called Tdap. It is recommended for all pre-teens going to the doctor for their regular check up at age 11 or 12. Adults who did not receive Tdap in pre-teen or teen should get one dose of Tdap instead of the Td (tetanus and diphtheria) booster. Pregnant women not previously vaccinated should get one dose of Tdap post-partum before leaving the hospital or birth center.

Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## Back to School

It won't be long before we see the yellow buses in our neighborhoods – a definite sign summer is almost over. The Englewood Health Department would like to remind parents to make sure their kids are ready to go to school. There are a few things parents can do to ensure a good physical and emotional start to school.

**HAVE YOUR CHILD'S VISION SCREENED.** It is very important to have this done because children may not realize that they can not see well. Make sure your child's prescription is up-to-date.

**HAVE YOUR CHILD'S HEARING TESTED.** Many school-age children have not been tested. If your child watches the television or listens to music very loudly, it may be a sign of hearing loss.

**IS YOUR CHILD ANXIOUS OR NERVOUS?** Most children are a little nervous in the beginning. It takes a little time to get in the routine of things. It is important to keep reassuring your child that everything will be ok.

**START YOUR CHILD'S DAY WITH A NUTRITIOUS BREAKFAST.** Children who eat breakfast are more alert in class.

**ARE YOUR CHILD'S IMMUNIZATIONS UP-TO-DATE?** This is a perfect time to review your child's immunization record. Make sure they have what they need for school. The last thing you want is for your child to miss any school because of something that you could have prevented. For more information about these services and immunizations, contact the Child Health Clinic at the Englewood Health Department at 201-568-3450 or 201-871-6511.

Englewood Health Watch/El Observador de Salud de Englewood is not copyrighted. Any or all parts may be reproduced without permission. However, an acknowledgment of the source would be appreciated. Reference to any site on the Internet is provided as a service to Englewood Health Watch/El Observador de Salud de Englewood readers and does not constitute or imply endorsement of these organizations or their programs by the Englewood Health Department. The Englewood Health Department is not responsible for the content of the pages found at these sites.