

# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Cooperative Extension Service

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## Food Safety

A recent recall of thousands of cases of green onions was yet another reminder of potential hazards within our food system. The onions, from a farm in Mexico, were contaminated with *Salmonella*, a bacteria commonly associated with raw eggs and poultry. It is not yet known how it got there, but there are a few ways to help ensure that the food that you eat will not make you sick.

1. Wash and cook your food correctly. Produce to be eaten raw should be washed thoroughly, and meats and eggs must be cooked to a proper temperature to be considered safe to eat.
2. Wash your hands and food surfaces often when preparing or eating food—especially after handling potentially hazardous foods like raw meats.
3. Keep foods out of the ‘danger zone’. Bacteria can grow quite quickly when foods are between 40-140 degrees F. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold—and cool foods as quickly as possible for storage in the refrigerator. Keeping a thermometer in your refrigerator (40 degrees) and freezer (0 degrees) can make sure that your foods stay safe while in storage.
4. Know your food. Have your own garden, or try to get your food from somebody who does. This is one great way to make sure your produce is not being fertilized or irrigated with potentially hazardous chemicals or bacteria, and that it stays safe from the garden to your plate.

Why bother with all these precautions? According to the US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), foodborne illness strikes 76 million individuals each year. While most are able to recover, the CDC estimates that 5,000 are not so fortunate, dying as a result of foodborne illness. Those with underdeveloped or compromised immune systems, such as the young, the elderly, and pregnant women are at the greatest risk.

Most cases of foodborne illness are preventable. Please take care to make sure you and your family are able to enjoy their foods with no unwanted side effects. The UW Extension office, along with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, will be hosting a ServSafe® Food Safety Certification course at the Sheridan County Courthouse November 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. For further information, or to register, feel free to email me or call the Sheridan County Extension office at 674-2980. *Kentz Willis, M.S., is the University Extension Educator in Nutrition and Food Safety for Sheridan and Johnson counties. He can be reached via email at [kwillis3@uwyo.edu](mailto:kwillis3@uwyo.edu).*