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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

General Food Safety¹

Amy Simonne²

Safe and nutritious food is essential to your family's health and well-being. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that each year, 76 million Americans are sick from consuming contaminated foods, and about 5,000 of those people die (CDC, 2007). The importance of food safety warrants its inclusion as a separate chapter in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

The major known cause of foodborne illness is due to small organisms too small to be seen by bare eyes. Signs and symptoms of foodborne illness can range from diarrhea, fever, vomiting, and abdominal cramps, to more severe illness, such as paralysis, meningitis, or death.

Foodborne illness affects different people in different ways. For a strong, healthy person, foodborne illness can be mild, but for those who have limited ability to fight disease, it can be a life-threatening ordeal. Infants and young children, pregnant women, older adults, and those who have compromised immune systems are among the high-risk group for foodborne illnesses and should be especially careful with what they eat.

You can protect yourself from foodborne illness in a number of ways, including proper hygiene and knowing how to shop for and properly store foods. It's important for consumers

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to obtain accurate and up-to-date food safety information from unbiased and reputable sources. And with that, bon appetit!

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