For Immediate Release

Food Safety Helps Keep Citizens Healthy

Recent news of a large scale recall on eggs and salmonella has created concern and heightened awareness of the issue of food-related illness. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department works diligently to serve and protect the health and safety of our community to prevent food related illnesses from occurring while also tracking, monitoring and investigating reportable disease outbreaks to stop the spread of disease and illness.

The recent recall of eggs has been issued because of food safety concerns of salmonellosis, infection caused by salmonella bacteria. Salmonella bacteria are present in the intestinal tracts of humans and animals, including birds and can cause infection resulting in illness in humans. Symptoms of salmonellosis include fever, abdominal cramping, and diarrhea which can last between 4—7 days. Salmonella bacteria may be present in the intestinal tracts of hens, and can contaminate eggs before they are laid. It is impossible to determine if an egg has been contaminated with salmonella and therefore precautions should be taken when eating eggs. Salmonella contamination can be decreased by practicing proper handling and hand washing and by cooking eggs thoroughly. According to the Missouri Food code, eggs should be fully cooked to a temperature of 145° and remain at that temperature for at least 15 seconds. Salmonellosis can cause serious illness and potentially death especially in people with impaired immune symptoms. If you experience any of these symptoms, see your health care provider for advice on treatment.

Food safety policies and procedures protect the health and safety of our community and reduce illnesses related to food contamination. These measures have contributed to a decline in food related disease outbreaks as well as put systems in place that employ recalls as a means of controlling the spread of disease. These regulations prevent much greater numbers of disease and illness from occurring. Without adequate food safety monitoring, disease outbreaks have the potential to affect many more members of our community and our nation.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department provides an invaluable service to our community by offering ongoing education and technical assistance to food service establishments throughout our community. Food safety monitoring and education allows people the opportunity to enjoy food from some of the great places preparing food throughout our city. As a regular function, the Environmental Services Division of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department trains and deploys food inspectors to monitor food safety to promote high standards of protection for the food that the public consumes. In addition to monitoring food temperatures to prevent disease outbreaks such as salmonellosis, food inspectors also provide guidance on preventing contamination through hand-washing, employing proper cleaning and storage techniques in addition to many other items found in the Missouri Food Code.

Thus far, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department has not received any reports of salmonellosis illness in our community linked to the egg recall. Epidemiology staff continually works with health care providers in our community to monitor, track and investigate disease outbreaks of reportable illnesses, including salmonellosis. Health care
providers throughout the community evaluate illness and report certain diseases to the Health Department for investigation. Epidemiology staff is trained to further evaluate the disease report and work to track disease symptoms to a common source in order to prevent spread of illness.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department offers information on food safety and handling on our website as well as in a monthly Food Handlers Safety Class that teaches health and safety to food handlers. This class is free of charge and open to the public. For more information on this class or to register for the next class, please visit our calendar or call 417-864-1667.

For more information contact: Katie Towns-Jeter MPH, Public Information Administrator, 417-874-1205.