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September is National Food Safety Education Month

The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) and the Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) are promoting September as National Food Safety Education Month. It's essential for people to understand how their behavior and activities contribute to the safety of food and how they can decrease the risk of foodborne illness, while also reducing food waste.

"Foodborne illnesses are preventable," said Environmental Health Director Brent Wheat. "Washing hands and surfaces often, separating raw meats from other foods, cooking to the right temperature, and refrigerating foods promptly are important measures that can be used to help prevent foodborne illness. Let's use National Food Safety Month to educate, advocate, and implement measures that keep our food safe and our bodies healthy."

Foodborne illness can result in short-term effects, long-term effects, and even death. Symptoms can include fever, upset stomach, and aches. Some people are at a higher risk for developing foodborne illness, including pregnant women, young children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems (such as transplant patients and individuals with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or diabetes).

To keep everyone safe from food poisoning, follow these four simple steps: clean, separate, cook, and chill.

1. **Clean:** Wash and sanitize hands, utensils, and surfaces often. Bacteria can spread and survive in many places.
2. **Separate:** Raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can spread bacteria to ready-to-eat foods. Keep them separate by using different cutting boards and utensils.
3. **Cook:** Use a food thermometer to check whether a meal has reached a safe internal temperature to kill any harmful bacteria.
4. **Chill:** Refrigerate perishable food within two hours. Plan to use or freeze your leftovers within four days. When reheating leftovers, heat to 165 F.

For more food safety information visit <https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/safe-food-handling>

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Proud member of the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance: 7 local health departments advocating for public health.