

Media Release

December 15, 2010

Food Handling Tips for the Holiday Season

As the holiday and party season is upon us, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit would like to remind people that this is the time of year when we typically see an increase in cases of Norovirus (sometimes referred to as the “stomach flu”) and other food borne illnesses. Many people enjoy attending functions at private homes or restaurants that serve meals in a buffet style. This style of food service allows you to choose your favourite foods in a quantity that suits your appetite; however, the food is handled by many people. Poor buffet etiquette may result in food becoming contaminated.

The Health Unit recommends the following tips to help keep the food safe that is on display.

- Prepare and handle foods with clean hands.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Crock pots can help keep hot foods hot. Larger bowls of ice placed underneath foods can help keep cold foods cold.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before approaching the buffet table.
- Each dish should have its own service utensil to prevent direct hand contact and ensure handles are left out of the food.
- Avoid serving foods in bulk where there is frequent hand contact in a common bowl i.e., chips.
- If you bring out more food to top up, bring it out in a clean container, do not mix with foods already out on display.
- Use only clean plates/bowls/cups at the buffet table for refills; never take used utensils back up to the buffet table.
- If you must cough or sneeze, please do so into your sleeve to avoid contaminating food.
- Accompany and serve young children each time they approach the buffet table.
- If you are ill or have been ill with symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea in the last 48 hours, please do not prepare food or attend public functions as you may make others sick.
- Keep foods out for as short a period of time as possible. Potentially hazardous foods that have been out for more than two hours should be discarded.

For more information on food safety, visit the Health Unit website at www.healthunit.org, or call the Health Unit at 613-345-5685 in Brockville or 613-283-2740 in Smiths Falls or the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 and ask to speak to a Public Health Inspector.