

Media Release

July 9, 2010

Cook Your Chicken Products

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit would like to remind our residents about the importance of properly handling and cooking processed chicken products following an increase in cases of Salmonellosis in Ontario. The infection is caused by the bacteria *Salmonella* Enteritidis

While the source of the *Salmonella* bacteria is still under investigation, it is believed that a contributing factor is the improper handling and cooking of breaded, processed chicken products, such as chicken strips, burgers and nuggets.

These products are often sold frozen and may be either raw or partially cooked. Although they may look cooked, these products have not been heat treated to destroy bacteria such as *Salmonella* and should be considered a raw chicken product.

To reduce the risk of *Salmonella* in processed chicken products, it is important to:

- Read and follow proper cooking and handling instructions on the package. Raw chicken should be cooked so that the minimum internal temperature of the product is 74C (165F). This is the temperature needed to effectively destroy *Salmonella*. Cooking temperatures can be easily checked using a food probe thermometer available at most grocery and hardware stores.
- Avoid cooking raw or partially cooked processed chicken products in the microwave. Microwaves do not always heat food evenly and may leave undercooked areas.
- Treat uncooked processed chicken products as raw chicken – keep them away from ready-to-eat foods to avoid contamination. Wash your hands thoroughly and disinfect countertops after handling the products.
- Avoid leaving already cooked chicken nuggets, strips and burgers at room temperature for long periods of time, for example in packed lunches. Cooked products should be eaten immediately or put in the refrigerator at 4C (40F). To be safe, it is recommended that leftover chicken products from the refrigerator be reheated to a minimum internal temperature of 74C (165F) before eating.

Salmonella Facts:

- Symptoms of salmonellosis may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever.
- *Salmonella* can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in some people, such as children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems.
- Symptoms of salmonellosis generally occur with 6 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food and may last 2 to 5 days.

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, 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.