



June 19, 2009

## **Short-term barbecue season can lead to long-term health problems**

### ***Albertans cautioned about e.Coli during warm summer months***

*Edmonton...* This time of year generally sees a peak in food related illness, such as E.coli 0157:H7 more commonly known as “hamburger disease”, as Albertans are firing up the grills and heading out for family picnics.

Alberta Health and Wellness, together with Alberta Health Services, advise that simple precautions taken before, during and after food preparation, especially with raw meats, can help prevent this disease from becoming a health problem. While it’s called hamburger disease and generally associated with ground meat, the bacteria can be found in other foods, such as poultry or pork and even cheese, sprouts, lettuce, yogurt, and unpasteurized milk and fruit juices.

The following are some food safety tips to help ensure a safe and healthy barbeque season:

- Wash hands before handling or eating food, and after handling raw meats
- Use hot soapy water to clean up counters and utensils
- Avoid cross contamination. Use a clean plate for cooked meats
- Keep raw meats separate from other foods
- Never partially cook meats and then finish cooking them later
- Thaw raw meats on a plate, on the lowest shelf of the refrigerator
- Cook hamburger and chicken to an internal temperature of 74 degrees Celsius or 165 degrees Fahrenheit, or until the inside of the meat is no longer pink and the juices run clear.

Symptoms of illness usually appear within three to four days of consumption. Common symptoms include mild dehydration and diarrhea. In more severe cases, individuals experience painful stomach cramps and bloody diarrhea. Mild cases of the illness usually clear up in seven to 10 days.

For more information about Hamburger Disease and its prevention, visit [www.health.alberta.ca](http://www.health.alberta.ca). If you think you may have symptoms, call HEALTHLink Alberta at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

- 30 -

#### **Media inquiries may be directed to:**

Michelle Hagen  
Communications  
Alberta Health and Wellness  
780-427-7164

Mary Mueller  
Communications  
Alberta Health Services  
780-349-8705 Ext. 224

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.