



# HEALTH NOTES

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**From the President,  
Dr. Melvin N. Kramer...**

In addition to Food Safety services, EHA provides financial assessment and consultation for the food-service industry. We analyze and offer cost-saving solutions on the various components of your Food Subsidy: Labor Costs - hours of operation, overtime, outsourcing vs. in-house production, manned stations vs. self-service; Food Costs - inventory levels/controls, selection; Paper Costs - foam vs. paper, utensil quality; Competition; Customer Surveys; Office Catering; Pantries - cost-containment; and Vending Machines - revenue and selection.

Additional information on any of the articles in this newsletter may be obtained by calling us at 410-484-9133 or by email at [ehacorporate@msn.com](mailto:ehacorporate@msn.com).

## THE FRONT LINES OF FOOD SAFETY

EHA recently played a key role in the widely acclaimed Food Safety Summit and Expo in Washington, DC. Dr. Mel Kramer, our company president, gave a presentation on "Epidemiology as it Relates to Food Safety," and he led a workshop on "Food Safety Crisis Management." The Summit was widely attended by government and food industry leaders. Prominent speakers and key organizations included: Governor Tom Ridge, White House Director of Homeland Security; Dr. Lester M. Crawford, Deputy Commissioner, FDA; Steven Reinemund, Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo; National Food Processors Association; National Restaurant Association; and International Food Safety Council. We at EHA remain vigilant on all issues of food safety and security.

## FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION WORKS!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), foodborne illness declined measurably in the US from 1996-2001. Food safety education is accredited, among other factors, for this progress.

An estimated 76 million persons contract foodborne illnesses each year in the US. The CDC surveillance data focuses on the major foodborne illnesses. Last year, these illnesses were identified by laboratory diagnosis in 13,705 cases. *Salmonella* was the most common, implicated in about 5,200 cases. *Campylobacter* was responsible for 4,740 cases.



From 1996-2001, rates of infection declined for 6 of the major foodborne illnesses as follows:

<i>Yersinia enterocolitica</i>	49%
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	35%
<i>Shigella</i>	35%
<i>Campylobacter</i>	27%
<i>E.coli 0157</i>	21%
<i>Salmonella</i>	15%

CDC data further reflects that from 1997-2001, *Cryptosporidium parvum* cases decreased 33%, and *Cyclospora cayentanensis* cases declined by an unspecified percentage. Of the major foodborne illnesses, only *Vibrio* infections have increased - 83% since 1996.

In addition to food safety education and focused attention on disease prevention, factors responsible for this progress include improved practices across-the-board "from farm to table," employing HACCP and other control measures. Health officials are optimistic that the food industry is on the right track, but they maintain it still has a long way to go. The report indicates a substantial and sustained decline in most foodborne illnesses, but not all, indicating that increased efforts are needed.

*Please contact us for more information on food safety education, including certification in nationally accredited programs.*



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### FOOD SAFETY SCIENCE

#### E. Coli . . .

0 is the acceptable level!  
(laboratory analysis usually reports 0 as  $\leq 3.0$ MPN/gm)

#### What the Numbers Mean . . .

Escherichia-coli (E.Coli) is commonly found in the gut of animals. Infected humans spread it through their feces, ultimately contaminating the food product by improper handling. Heat treatment is the primary means of destroying these bacteria. Preventing cross-contamination of food and food contact surfaces is critical, as is routine hand washing and proper use of disposable gloves by employees. Remember, humans are the most common source of cross-contamination. Foodhandler education is vital for the prevention of foodborne illness.

## FOOD ALLERGY DANGERS

In the US, food allergies affect up to 2% of adults and 7% of children – researchers estimate that about 4 million people have a “true” food allergy.

A food allergy (or hypersensitivity) is an abnormal response to a food triggered by the immune system. Typical symptoms are nausea, hives, skin rash, nasal congestion, and wheezing. The condition is usually temporary and not life-threatening. However, food allergies can result in serious illness or even a lethal allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) that constricts airways in the lungs, severely lowers blood pressure, and causes suffocation by swelling of the tongue or throat. An estimated 30,000 Americans go into anaphylactic shock each year – and about 150 of them die. Tragic deaths of children who unknowingly eat cookies or cakes that contain nuts are frequent news events.



Although more than 200 food products can trigger an allergic reaction, the FDA identifies the “BIG EIGHT” as accounting for more than 90% of all food allergic reactions:

- Peanuts
- Soybeans
- Crustacea/Shellfish (lobster, shrimp, crab, crayfish)
- Fish
- Milk
- Tree Nuts (almonds, cashews, macadamia nuts, walnuts, pistachios, etc.)
- Eggs
- Wheat

There is no treatment or cure for food allergies. People who have food allergies must be able to identify and avoid the foods that cause them. Proper labeling of foods is critical. All foodservice employees should know the BIG EIGHT and be aware if they are included in foods. Employees must also be able to answer questions from customers regarding product ingredients (e.g., whether a specific baked product contains nuts).

## FOOD SECURITY UPDATE

In our last issue, we reported on new security developments and guidelines for the foodservice industry. We have made great progress toward preventing agroterrorism, but important steps remain. The Food and Drug Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and other public health agencies are working together to address food security concerns. Regrettably, this issue will not diminish in time. Officials warn that the threat will actually increase in the future as methods by which terrorists can contaminate foods become more potent, less expensive, and more readily available. Please contact us for additional information, including the FDA’s Food Security Preventive Measures Guidance for the Foodservice Industry.

