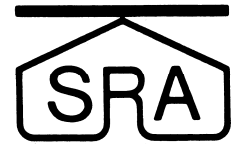


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Good kitchen practices can keep you and your children from getting sick

McClean, VA - Improper food preparation habits account for many food illnesses, however, such habits are not just found in food processing plants or in supermarkets. They also occur in the home. One third of the participants in a Dutch study of how people prepared a chicken recipe undercooked the chicken and 70 percent showed poor sanitary practices, not changing the cutting board or the knife used with the raw chicken, not washing their hands after handling the raw chicken, or doing neither.

This study, "Cooking Practices in the Kitchen – Observed Versus Predicted Behavior," was reported in April issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Risk Analysis*, published by the Society for Risk Analysis. Dr. Esther van Asselt, from the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment in the Netherlands at the time of the study, was the principal author of the study, which conducted carefully controlled observations of the food preparation habits of 25 individuals.

Previous studies have shown that improper food handling accounts for a large portion of the illnesses that occur when people eat that food. Improper handling and the undercooking of meat are major risk factors for gastroenteritis, an infection of the stomach and bowels that results in watery diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea or vomiting, and sometimes fever.

In Dr. van Asselt's study, individuals were asked to prepare the same chicken recipe while they were being studied and videotaped to assess their handling and cooking practices. She found that "66 percent of participants didn't wash their hands

after handling the raw chicken. When the chicken has been cooked properly, hand washing becomes the important factor in serving a safe product.”

Asked what safety tips the public should remember from these study results, Dr. van Asselt said, “cooking the food properly, separating raw and cooked items, and proper hand washing.” And, although this study used chicken, she believes it applies to all meat varieties.

Dr. van Asselt concludes “It seems essential to learn proper cooking habits at an early stage since it is difficult to change those habits when individuals are older. More education on hygiene and safe food preparation at school will help children and adults implement good cooking practices.”

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(Note to editors: The complete study is available upon request from Kelly Classic, media@hps.org, or may be accessed at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122267374/issue>)

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