

Eating Poultry in Times of Avian Flu?

Recently we have found updates about avian flu in newspapers every day. True, the number of people diagnosed with avian flu, domestic or overseas, put off quite a few poultry-eaters. People often ask: ‘Do you still eat poultry even in times of avian flu?’ Or, ‘Is chicken still safe to eat?’ Is it safe to eat poultry then?

As pointed out by WHO and the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, it is safe to eat properly prepared and cooked meat because as influenza viruses are inactivated by sufficient heating, the viruses can be killed by normal temperatures used for cooking (such that food reaches 70°C in all parts). On the contrary, the consumption of raw meat and uncooked blood-based dishes is a high-risk practice and is discouraged. Hence, poultry should be thoroughly cooked. Sick animals should not be eaten.



Everyone should also observe food hygiene. Do:

- ♦ wash hands before processing foods
- ♦ avoid cross contamination, always keep raw meat separate from cooked or ready-to-eat foods; always keep a chopping board and a set of knives only for the use of raw meat
- ♦ wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling raw meat
- ♦ refrain from putting cooked meat back on the same plate or surface it was on before cooking
- ♦ note that foods containing raw or half-boiled eggs are high-risk foods
- ♦ wash and disinfect all surfaces and utensils that have been in contact with raw meat

Nutritional tips for eating poultry:

- The skin from poultry (chicken, duck, goose) is high in fat. Removal of skin before eating is recommended.
- The meat from poultry (chicken, duck, goose) is high in protein, which forms part of a healthy diet.
- Low-fat cooking methods, such as grilling, baking, barbecuing, steaming, stewing, etc., are recommended for poultry.
- Cut down on deep-fried poultry, with or without skin, to avoid excessive intake of fat and calories.

To know more about ...

- ✧ healthy eating, please visit 'Health Zone' website at <http://www.cheu.gov.hk>
- ✧ 'Health@work.hk Project', please visit <http://www.healthatwork.gov.hk>