Promoting safe food from field to plate
By Andrea Bassett

We've all joked about the '5-second rule' – it's okay to eat something that was on the floor for less than 5 seconds – but food safety is no laughing matter. This year, the World Health Organization is championing food safety as part of World Health Day on April 7, 2015.

Did you know that around the world, unsafe food is linked to the deaths of two million people each year? That's why the WHO wants you to know how important it is to improve food safety as it travels from the farm, through various food production systems, and finally onto your plate.

Here's why the WHO is working on food safety:
• When harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites or chemicals get into food, it can cause upset from diarrhea to death.
• The food production system, including distribution, is constantly changing – and so are the pathogens we try to eliminate from the system.
• In our increasingly globalized food supply, it's more important than ever to have one set of food standards across many nations. The WHO promotes the Codex Alimentarius, a set of food safety standards, to prevent outbreaks of food-borne illness.

While you may not be able to control what happens in the entire food supply chain, you can control what happens in your own kitchen.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."
— Benjamin Franklin

Prevent food contamination at home with these tips from the WHO's 'Five Keys to Safer Food':
• Keep clean – you and your equipment need to be clean!
• Separate raw and cooked food – have separate cutting boards for meat and vegetables.
• Cook food thoroughly.
• Keep food at safe temperatures to avoid the invisible proliferation of micro-organisms in tomorrow's lunch.
• Use safe water and raw materials – fortunately many of us don't need to worry about safe water.

So, on this World Health Day, take a moment to consider what you can do to know where your food comes from and how to treat it once it's in your kitchen. And the 5-second rule? Come on, that's just gross!

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