

Shop Safe Tips

There are many wonderful places to shop for your food in the tri-county area such as supermarkets, farmers' markets, specialty food stores, the farm gate, or food festivals and special events. We encourage you to shop locally for fresh products. When choosing your food it is important to know that not all foods are regulated or inspected.

Protect your family by being an informed shopper. Observe how the food is handled and stored and don't hesitate to ask if the products have been produced at an inspected facility.

The following tips may help you make informed choices and provide your family with fresh, safe locally produced food products:

- In Ontario, all animals raised for meat, must be slaughtered and processed in a provincially or federally licensed plant. These products must bear a stamp indicating the plant number where they were processed. Choose only inspected meats.
- Pasteurized milk is always the safest choice for you and your family. Only pasteurized milk is legal to sell in Ontario.
- Avoid purchasing unclean or cracked eggs. Eggs must be graded and kept refrigerated.
- Attractive labels are not a guarantee that the product was produced in a safe manner. Public health inspectors do not inspect private home kitchens where many home preserves are produced.
- Ensure that canned products have labels that indicate the ingredients, handling instructions and the name and address of the producer.
- If choosing ready to eat products ensure they are properly packaged to prevent contamination.
- Choose produce that is not cracked or damaged, as dirt and germs may enter inside and cannot be removed by washing. Organically grown produce may not have pesticides; however it is no safer when it comes to bacterial contamination.
- Avoid snacking while you shop, items such as fruits and vegetables on display are not ready to eat without washing.
- Vendors are required to store and display potentially hazardous foods at the correct temperature - refrigerated, frozen or keep cooked ready to eat foods hot. Keep these products safe by bringing a cooler with ice packs so you can transport them home at the proper temperature.
- When packing your food products remember to separate raw meats from other foods to prevent the blood and juices from contaminating ready to eat foods.
- Be environmentally friendly by using re-useable grocery bags and bins, but remember that these need to be washed between uses. Designate one for raw meat.
- Wash your hands after your shopping experience, especially before you eat.

Enjoy the freshness our area has to offer! Get to know those who produce your food and support our local economy. For more information on food safety, visit www.healthunit.org/foodsafety



For more information, please call the
Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit's
Health ACTION Line at **1-800-660-5853**
or visit our website at www.healthunit.org