

Nutritional Nuggets

Westchester County Health Department

Andrew J. Spano, Westchester County Executive

Joshua Lipsman, MD, MPH, Commissioner

(914) 813-5000

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Protecting Our Food Supply



Bioterrorism is the intentional use of infectious biological agents, or germs, to cause illness. It can take many forms, including attacks on our agricultural and food systems.

Since the September 11th attack, national security has been foremost in the minds of all Americans. The possibility of a biological or chemical threat to our food supply is a source of great concern.

Government agencies at the Federal, State and County levels work together to assure that our food supply is among the safest in the world. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) coordinate with food safety agencies at federal, state and county levels to strengthen the country's food safety system across the distribution chain - from the farm to the table. This cooperation has resulted in more effective prevention programs, new surveillance systems and the ability to respond more quickly to outbreaks of foodborne illness. Since September 11th, these agencies have enhanced their emergency response capabilities by realigning existing resources for possible use against terrorism and by strengthening emergency response plans.

Measures have been taken to improve surveillance systems for foodborne illnesses and to identify outbreaks more quickly.

To ensure food safety, everyone along the farm-to-table continuum plays an important role.

What can you do to protect yourself and your family from food tampering or other kinds of food contamination?

You are the final judge of the safety of the food you buy. Take the following steps to protect you and your family:

- ◆ **Carefully check** whether the food package or can is intact before opening it.
- ◆ **If packaging has been damaged, dented or opened** prior to purchase, the contents should not be used.
- ◆ **Be alert to** abnormal odor, taste or appearance of food.
- ◆ **If there is any doubt** about a food's safety, don't eat it.
- ◆ **If you suspect food tampering**, report it to the Westchester County Health Department at 914-813-5000.



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What food handling practices should you routinely follow to help prevent foodborne illness?

You can protect yourself by following basic safe food handling practices:

- ◆ **Wash all raw food products** such as fruits and vegetables before eating to help eliminate bacteria that may be on the food.
- ◆ **Wash hands, cuttings boards, knives and utensils** in hot, soapy water before and after handling raw food. This helps to prevent bacteria from spreading and contaminating other food.
- ◆ **Separate raw food** such as meat, poultry and seafood from foods that are ready-to-eat.
- ◆ **Cook foods thoroughly** to kill harmful bacteria that may be present.
- ◆ **Refrigerate food promptly** as cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying.

What should you do to plan for unexpected emergencies?

Have a three-day supply of food and water available for you, your family and your pets.

- ◆ **Stock up on nonperishable foods:** ready-to-eat canned foods including meats, fish, fruits, juice, dry milk, soups and vegetables. Choose single-serving portions if possible. Have a manual can opener available too!
- ◆ **Keep high energy foods on hand** such as peanut butter, nuts and trail mix.
- ◆ **Rotate your emergency food supply every year** to keep it fresh in case you need it.
- ◆ **Keep bottled water** on hand. Have 3 gallons of water available for each family member for drinking and sanitation to provide a three-day emergency supply (i.e. 1 gallon per person per day). Store water in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. Label bottled water with the date. Replace every six months to ensure freshness.

Recipe Corner

Keep the canned items and non-perishable ingredients in the recipe below on your emergency supply shelf so you'll be ready to prepare a tasty, healthy dinner entrée.

Tuna Noodle Casserole

(Adapted from [Something Different](#), American Institute for Cancer Research)

Canola oil cooking spray

1 can (10 1/2 oz.) low-fat, reduced sodium condensed cream of chicken soup

1/2 cup nonfat dry milk, reconstituted

2 cups cooked noodles

14 1/2 ounce can cut green beans, no salt added

1 6-ounce can and 1 3-ounce can water-packed chunk light tuna, drained

2 Tbsp. bottled pimentos, drained and chopped

1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

3 Tbsp. dry breadcrumbs

1 Tbsp. margarine, melted

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Coat a 2-quart casserole with cooking spray.

2. In prepared baking dish, mix soup and milk to combine. Stir in noodles, beans, tuna, pimentos and pepper.

3. Cover pan with foil. Bake until hot, about 20 minutes.

4. Mix breadcrumbs with margarine. Sprinkle casserole with breadcrumbs. Bake until crumbs brown, about 8 minutes.

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving:

Calories	277	Saturated Fat	1 g
Protein	22 g	Dietary Fiber	4 g
Total Fat	7 g	Sodium	612 mg**
Cholesterol	111 mg		

**Recipe prepared with very low sodium tuna packed in water has 410 mg sodium per serving

