AUTHOR: Meera Murugesan SECTION: LIFE & TIMES PAGE: 15 PRINTED SIZE: 821.00cm² REGION: KL PHOTO: Full Color ASR: MYR 28,192.00 ITEM ID: MY0061992147

31 DEC, 2024

A clean kitchen prevents hepatitis

New Straits Times, Malaysia

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HE kitchen is considered the heart of any home or restaurant. But amid the aroma of freshly prepared meals, have you ever wondered about the hidden dangers that could lurk there? Before your next meal, under-

Before your next meal, under-stand the connection between dirty kitchens and hepatitis. Whether dining out or preparing food at home, knowing these risks is vital for the health and well-being of you and your loved ones. Hepatitis A and E are viral infections

primarily transmitted via the faecalfrom the target and the ladest oral route, often through contaminated food or water. Hepatitis A and E infections are usually short-term and do not lead to chronic illness.

Symptoms can range from mild to severe, and some individuals may be

Common signs include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, jaundīce, dark urine, pale stools and itchy skin," says Columbia Asia Hos-pital — Bintulu medical officer and occupational health doctor Dr

Tania Peter Jang.
While most people recover within weeks to months, in rare cases, hepatitis A and E can lead to acute liver failure. This risk is higher for older adults, pregnant women or those with pre-existing liver conditions.

"Hepatitis A and E viruses can contaminate food if hands are not properly washed after handling potentially con-taminated items or coming into contact with faecal matter," says Dr Tania. These viruses can persist on cutting

Heal

loads, utensits, countertops, sinks and even in water for weeks. Improper handwashing, failing to change gloves between tasks, and neglecting to clean hands after bathroom use can contribute to virus trans-

CROSS-CONTAMINATION
Cross-contamination often occurs in kitchens where surfaces, utensils or hands are not thoroughly cleaned tween tasks

cially shellfish, fruits and vegetables, can carry hepatitis A and E if they come into contact with contaminated surfac-es or utensils," adds Dr Tania. Infected food handlers can also

transmit the virus before showing symptoms, particularly if they fail to

maintain proper hygiene or use gloves. Poor water quality and pest infesta-tions also heighten hepatitis risks. "Pests, such as flies and rodents,

rests, such as fittes and rodering, drawn to unsanitary conditions, can spread the virus through droppings, contaminating food storage areas, water supplies and kitchen surfaces." To ensure kitchen safety, inspect

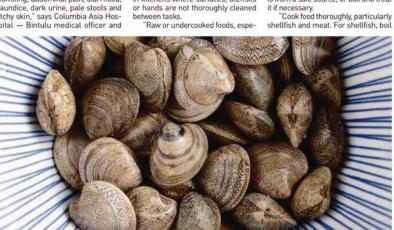
and seal entry points to prevent pests from entering. Do not overcrowd your refrigerator, as this can hinder airflow, says Dr Tania.

She recommends keeping raw and colored for constant to a wijd strate.

cooked foods separate to avoid crosscontamination.

FOOD HANDLING

Safe food handling begins with clean raw materials. Ensure drinking water is from a safe source, or boil and treat



Shellfish are among the food with a hepatitis risk, PICTURE CREDIT: FREEPIK



Hepatitis A and E viruses can contaminate food if hands are not properly washed after handling potentially contaminated items or coming into contact with faecal matter. Dr Tania Peter Jang

until the shells open and then for an

additional three to five minutes.
"For meat, ensure juices run clear and no blood is visible."
Additionally, restrict anyone exhibiting symptoms of illness, such as diarrhoea or vomiting, from preparing or handling food.

Proper handwashing with soap and water is essential before and after handling food, after using the toilet, and between kitchen tasks.

between kitchen tasks. "Regularly clean and sanitise sur-

COMMON FOOD PRONE TO HEPATITIS

- Shellfish
 Raw fruits and vegetables
 Drinks and ice made from a contaminated water
- a contaminated water supply
 Unpasteurised dairy products, such as milk and cheese
 Ready-to-eat food
 Food prepared with contaminated water as an ingredient, such as soups and stews

faces, utensils and equipment, particu-

larly after preparing raw meat."

In addition to hand hygiene, it is important to clean and sanitise kitchen surfaces, utensils, and equipment regularly to eliminate potential con-

Ideally, this should be done with hot water and a cleansing agent, especially after preparing raw meat or handling potentially contaminated food.

Promptly removing food waste and keeping everything clean are key to preventing pests. Also, using gloves when handling ready-to-eat food is a good practice.

Remember to change gloves regu-

larly and wash your hands before put-ting on a new pair. "It might seem like extra work, but it really makes a big difference," says

Finally, using separate utensils for raw food and cooked or ready-to-eat food helps prevent cross-contamina-

Maintaining a clean kitchen isn't just about aesthetics — it's a key step

Just about aestretics — it's a key step in safeguarding your health.

By understanding the risks and adopting good hygiene practices, you can reduce the chances of hepatitis transmission in your home or workplace.



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SUMMARIES

THE kitchen is considered the heart of any home or restaurant. But amid the aroma of freshly prepared meals, have you ever wondered about the hidden dangers that could lurk there?Beforeyournextmeal,understand the connection between dirty kitchensandhepatitis.Whetherdining outorpreparingfoodathome,knowing these risks is vital for the health and well-being of you and your loved ones.HepatitisAandEareviralinfections primarily transmitted via the faecaloralroute,oftenthroughcontaminated food or water. Hepatitis A and E infectionsareusuallyshort-termanddonot lead to chronic illness.