

FDA warns of raw cookie dough dangers

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(HealthDay)—As tempting as it might be to sample some raw dough while you're making a batch of cookies this holiday season, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warns that the guilty pleasure could make

you very sick.

That's because flour is a raw product that hasn't been treated to kill germs such as E. coli. Those germs are only killed when food made with flour is cooked. Not only that, the [raw eggs](#) used to make cookie [dough](#) or cake batter can contain salmonella.

Unlike eggs, flour products have long shelf lives and could be in your pantry for a long time.

That's why one doctor offers this suggestion: Check the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for any recalled products, said Dr. Rachel Bruce, associate chairperson in the department of emergency medicine at Long Island Jewish Forest Hills Hospital in New York City.

"Throw out any of those products if they are in your kitchen," she added.

Don't think it won't happen to you, either. In 2016, an outbreak of E. coli infections linked to raw flour made 63 people sick in 24 states.

Health officials eventually tracked down the source of the outbreak to flour sold under several [brand names](#), including Gold Medal, Gold Medal Wondra and Signature Kitchens. Any products containing this flour were recalled at the time, the FDA said.

And just last month, ConAgra Brands recalled four types of Duncan Hines cake mixes after a form of salmonella was detected in a box of Classic White Cake Mix in Oregon. The tainted product may be linked to five cases of salmonella infection across three states, the company said.

So, what can you do to spare everyone [food poisoning](#) over the holidays?

Start with your kids: Never let them play with or eat raw dough, including dough for crafts such as homemade play dough or ornaments. Always bake or cook raw dough and batter before eating, and follow the recommended directions for cooking or baking, the FDA said.

Don't make milkshakes with products that contain raw flour, such as cake mix, and don't use raw, homemade cookie dough in ice cream. Cookie dough ice cream sold in stores contains dough that has been treated to be safe, the FDA noted.

Keep raw foods such as flour or eggs separate from ready-to-eat foods, and follow label directions to refrigerate products containing raw dough or eggs until they are cooked, the agency said.

Wash your hands with running water and soap after handling [flour](#), raw eggs or any surfaces that they have touched. Wash bowls, utensils, countertops and other surfaces with warm, soapy water, Bruce stressed.

Apart from taking these food safety precautions, you should know the symptoms of food poisoning, the FDA added.

The symptoms of E. coli infections vary for each person, but often include severe stomach cramps, diarrhea (often bloody), and vomiting.

People usually get sick a few days after swallowing the germ. Most people recover within a week. However, some people can develop a serious type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome.

"In contrast, Salmonella infections generally develop 6 to 48 hours after eating contaminated [food](#), though this period can occasionally be longer," said Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

"Symptoms typically include fever, scant or watery diarrhea, and severe abdominal cramps," he added. "In most cases, the illness lasts 4 to 7 days and people recover well without the need for antibiotics."

Salmonella is more dangerous for older adults, infants and people with weakened immune systems, the FDA noted.

More information: Robert Glatter, MD, emergency physician, Lenox Hill Hospital, New York City; Rachel Bruce, M.D., associate chairperson, department of emergency medicine, Long Island Jewish Forest Hills Hospital, New York City; U.S. Food and Drug Administration, news release, December 2018

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on the [dangers of raw dough](#).

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