**Fire Prevention**

Most house fires start in the kitchen, where you could be faced with the potential threat of dry cooking fires, or grease fires. The most common is the dry cooking fire caused by the moisture cooking out of the food and the food in the pan burning down to produce smoke. At the very least, the resulting heat may damage the surrounding area and the smoke may leave a film and a severe odor in the kitchen. If a pan fire is caught in time, damage should be minimal and may only require light clean-up. It is for this reason however, that it is so important to stay in the kitchen while cooking on the stove. At the first sign of smoke, remove the pan from the stove and put a lid over the pan to cut off the oxygen supply to the fire.

A grease fire occurs when oily or greasy foods are heated and ignite. A grease fire can do a great deal of damage to anything close to the open flames, and can spread very easily to surrounding areas. Again, stay close by and at the first sign of a fire, place a lid on the pan and the fire should suffocate. If needed, baking soda can be used to extinguish a grease fire, by dumping a large amount directly into the pan.

**Never put water on a grease fire.** Water will splatter the grease and spread the fire. You should also never move a pan that is on fire because of grease; the handle will quickly be too hot to carry and the flames could spread behind you.

A note about ovens: always check your oven before turning it on to pre-heat. Unexpected pans or other items stored in an oven, or even items on top of the oven, can create a serious fire hazard.

Unfortunately cooking is not the only fire hazard you should be cautious of. Keep your fireplaces, wood and coal stoves, and central furnaces properly cleaned and inspected and be especially careful when using space heaters. Unplug them if you’re leaving the area and be sure to keep them far away from flammable objects or other ignition sources—drapes and furniture especially. Unattended cigarettes and candles can also pose a threat. When smoking, use a large, deep ashtray on a sturdy surface like a table or someplace safe off the floor, and before adding it with other trash, be sure that ashes are cooled or doused with water.

Take time this month to review your common practices both in the kitchen and in other areas where there may be a potential fire hazard: make plans with your family to conduct fire drills and practice escape routes; and test your fire safety equipment. Contact Institutional Safety for more information regarding safety equipment: fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and home escape ladders are available at discounted pricing.
Communicable Diseases

A communicable disease is any bacterial, viral, fungi, or parasitic infection in the body that can be spread from one individual to another. Communicable diseases vary from the common cold and flu to more uncommon diseases like meningitis.

Please review the precautions necessary to prevent the spread of germs, especially as we approach flu season and are at the same time seeing an increased prevalence of the novel H1N1, or swine flu, virus.

- Get a seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 (if available and if you are in the recommended or target population)
- Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing and before preparing food or interacting with others. Alcohol-based or other waterless hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and immediately discard the used tissue in a waste container. If you need to, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands.
- Stay home if you are sick. Staying away from others while you are sick can prevent others from getting sick too.

More about H1N1:
- H1N1 influenza is a new influenza virus which may cause symptoms similar to seasonal flu including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, and fatigue. A significant number of people diagnosed with H1N1 influenza are reporting vomiting and diarrhea as well.
- Most people who have become ill with the H1N1 flu have had relatively mild symptoms and can be rehabilitated at home.
- Suggested items to keep on hand include: thermometer, bottled fluids, hand sanitizer, paper masks, Tylenol or Ibuprofen to reduce fever, and tissues.
- Symptoms associated with influenza may be reduced by drinking plenty of fluids, taking a lukewarm bath or shower, taking fever-reducing medicines, medication for body aches or pain, and/or over-the-counter cough and cold medication. Also be sure to get plenty of rest and stay away from others as much as possible.
- Warning signs that need urgent medical attention include: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting, or flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough.


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