Leader’s Responsibility

Commanders are responsible for implementing an effective Force Health Protection (FHP) program, and Service members and Civilian personnel are responsible for complying with prevention measures.

Prevention of illness is key to ensuring military operational readiness. Gastrointestinal illness, such as diarrhea, commonly affects deployed U.S. military personnel and can adversely affect operational readiness.

Increased Exposure to Local Foods

Recent changes in strategy and the importance placed on counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in a number of countries around the world have increased the amount of time certain personnel spend off base, immersed in the lives of local populations. Part of this cultural immersion involves participating in local customs and dining with local populations, which increases exposure to local foods.

Being invited to dine with locals is generally considered an honor and is a powerful way to build trust. Cultural sensitivity and tact are critical. Refusing food can offend partners. Certain foods, however, carry a higher risk of foodborne illness than others and should be avoided.

What Risks Are Involved With Eating Local?

At times, U.S. forces may choose or be required to eat local foods with community leaders and residents. Eating local allows for enhanced understanding and exchange of customs between U.S. forces and local communities. The practice can create significant bonding and improve working relationships, trust and morale.

Although eating local may be good for relationship building, it does carry some risk. Those not accustomed to eating local foods may be more susceptible to foodborne illnesses. Foodborne illness may be relatively short in duration (hours or days) or severe, long-term or chronic, and even life-threatening. Potential for lost duty days, decreased performance, or even mission failure exists.

In addition, when eating local food, Service members should also be aware of the potential for intentional food contamination and poisoning risks by enemy forces. Maintaining situational awareness is critical.

When to Seek Medical Attention

If Service members experience any of the following symptoms, have them seek immediate medical attention. Common symptoms of foodborne illness include:

» Nausea
» Vomiting
» Diarrhea
» Fever
# How to Decrease the Risk

Providing your personnel with the information they need to make educated choices regarding the types of local food they eat can help to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and its impact on your unit. The chart below identifies common local foods based on the level of risk they pose for foodborne illness. This information does not replace command guidance. Personnel should always seek command guidance before eating from unapproved sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Risk Foods</th>
<th>Higher Risk Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eat Lower Risk Foods with Caution</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoid Higher Risk Foods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Breads</td>
<td>» Milk and other dairy products (cheese, ice cream and butter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Fully cooked vegetables, beans and rice that are kept and served hot</td>
<td>» Partially cooked or raw meats or fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Boiled or well done meats (lamb, beef, poultry and fish) that are eaten within 2 hours after cooking</td>
<td>» Raw, leafy vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Hard-skin fruits and vegetables that you peel yourself (bananas, oranges, limes)</td>
<td>» Leftovers, take-home, or doggie bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Hot tea</td>
<td>» Opened/unsealed beverage containers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Bottled water or canned carbonated drinks that you open yourself</td>
<td>» Ice, iced drinks, frozen desserts and juices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>» Locally canned or packaged products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Use Your Resources:

» Check the USAPHC HIP eCatalog to download and order food safety and other products for your Service members: https://usaphcapps.amedd.army.mil/HIOMacropage/.


## References: