

The 12 Days of Christmas

An Environmental Health Holiday Carol

**On the 12th Day of Christmas,
my Sanitarian saved me from...**

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Twelve Bed Bugs a Biting

Bed bugs, about the size of an apple seed, are hitchhikers on human clothes and suitcases and are increasingly a problem in hotels, movie theaters and public transportation. Contact professional pest control to treat for these resilient pests.

Eleven RVs Dumping

It was only about 150 years ago that people figured out that human waste can cause human illness. Recreational Vehicles usually contain tanks to hold toilet waste and sink/shower waste water. These tanks must be 'dumped' in a sanitary manner to prevent contamination of local streams, which could increase the spread of diseases to humans, livestock and pets. R.V. parks are inspected twice a year by your local environmental health inspector.

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Ten Unlicensed Food Trucks

Unlicensed food trucks may be dangerous to their customers and their workers. Licensing provides a baseline standard for equipment and food safety. Food trucks are licensed by the local county health department and are regularly inspected to help prevent the spread of foodborne illness.

Nine Cooks a Coughing

The Food Rules prohibit a food employee with a persistent sneeze, cough, or runny nose from working with food in a commercial kitchen. Coughing can contaminate food or equipment, and can be a symptom of *Salmonella typhi*, one of the Big 5 Reportable illnesses, or another communicable disease.

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Eight School Kids Scratching

Scabies, also known as the seven-year itch, is a contagious skin infestation of the mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. A scabies infestation results when the tiny mites burrow into the outer layers of human skin and lay eggs, creating a relentless itch and rash. Scabies is highly communicable and spread through personal touch or sharing of bedding or towels. It regularly occurs in schools and child care centers.

Seven Hep A Cases

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. It can range from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a severe illness lasting several months, and in rare cases, can cause death. Hepatitis A is caused by a person unknowingly ingesting the Hepatitis A virus from food, drinks or objects contaminated by undetected amounts of stool from an infected person.

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Six Leaky Check Valves

A double check valve or double check assembly (DCVA) is a backflow prevention device designed to protect water supplies from contamination. It consists of two one-way check valves in series so one check valve will still operate even if the other is stuck open or malfunctioning. Most homes have DCVA at the meter near the street to protect the water supply from contaminants within the house or irrigation system. Oregon law requires check valves be tested annually.

Five Poopy Fingers

Feces from people or animals is a significant source of germs like Salmonella, E. coli O157 and Norovirus. These kinds of germs can get onto hands after using the toilet or changing a diaper, but also in less obvious ways, like after handling raw meats that have invisible amounts of animal poop on them. CDC estimates that the simple act of proper handwashing can reduce gastrointestinal illness by 23-58%.

How did handwashing begin as a practice to reduce illness? In 1847, Ignaz Semmelweis was the Chief of Obstetrics at the Vienna General Hospital. In addition to Obstetrics, the hospital was also a teaching facility where medical students often performed dissections of cadavers.

After noting that the maternal mortality rate was nearly 15% from Puerperal Fever, Semmelweis proposed a connection between interns performing autopsies and then assisting with childbirth. He introduced handwashing with a chlorinated lime solution and the mortality rate immediately dropped by 90%. Thus handwashing to protect public health began.

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Four Rabid Bat Bites

Although relatively rare in our area, rabies is active and can be spread to people through animal bites. Rabies is an acute infection of the nervous system and all mammals including humans are susceptible. If left untreated rabies is always fatal.

In Oregon the main reservoir for the rabies virus is bats. Bats can spread rabies directly through humans by contact and bat bites aren't necessarily visible. Bats can also spread rabies to unvaccinated pets and wild animals, which in turn can bite humans. All animal bites should be treated with the possibility that rabies was contracted.

Three Beaver Fevers

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Giardiasis, popularly known as Beaver Fever, is a parasitic intestinal disease caused by the parasite *Giardia lamblia*. It's commonly found in lakes and streams and is associated with the feces from warm blooded animals. The disease got its name after an outbreak in which hikers in Banff National Park became ill from drinking untreated stream water contaminated with *Giardia* from beavers in the area. There are approximately 15,000 reported cases in the U.S. each year.

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Two Raw Beef Patties

Eating raw or undercooked burgers comes with an increased risk of foodborne illness. Consumer advisories are common on menus but what truly is the risk? Many pathogenic bacteria are spread through food that is not fully cooked to kill bacteria. One common type found in meat is *E. coli*.

Not all types of *E. coli* cause disease, however some types of the bacteria produce toxins that can lead to serious illness. Unlike steak where bacteria are on the outside of the meat and can be killed by searing the meat, in ground beef the bacteria can be spread throughout the food including the center. Pathogenic bacteria like *E. coli* don't change the look, taste or texture of the food and you can't tell they are there. After eating contaminated foods symptoms typically occur between 1 and 8 days and include: severe diarrhea (often bloody), abdominal pain, vomiting and hemolytic uremic syndrome, which is a type of kidney failure.

And a Fecal Accident in your Pool...

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More and more evidence gathered by the CDC shows that bather hygiene has a significant impact on pool water quality. Bathers who do not shower before swimming bring many contaminants into a pool. Most of these contaminants cannot be filtered out of the pool water, so must be oxidized (chemically 'burned') out of the water using chlorine. Swimmer contaminants include lotions, cosmetics, deodorants, skin cells, saliva, sweat and an average of 1.4 grams of fecal matter per swimmer. cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/

**May none of these afflictions affect you and yours
this holiday.**

Thank you to Environmental Health Departments, for providing...

Regulation,

Education and

Consultation

Food Safety



Childcare Facilities



Drinking Water



Pool and Spa Safety



Pest Control



Hotels and Public Lodging



Animal Bites



To Protect Our Communities.

Brought to you by Deschutes County Environmental Health, December 2018