

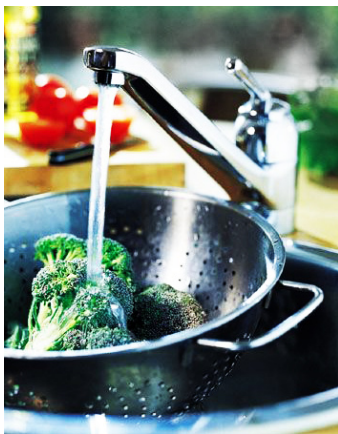
# Clean Food, Safe Food

by **Pedro D. Abella**

**F**ood is universal. It brings people together, whether for a feast or just a simple meal. But while food nourishes and gives our body the necessary strength for it to fully function, it may also cause illnesses brought about by bacteria or different disease-causing microbes unseen by the naked eye. That is why food safety awareness is important.

In one of the episodes of “PhilHealth...Hataw Sa Serbisyo,” a weekly program aired over Radio DWIZ, Dr. Rey B. Aquino, President and CEO of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) tackled the unforeseen dangers brought about by eating contaminated food and beverages. He cited the World Health Organization’s data showing that about 1.8 million people are dying every year from diarrheal diseases, mostly from consuming contaminated food and beverages.

According to the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC), there are more than 250 different food-borne diseases due to bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Contamination can occur during growing, harvesting, processing, storing, shipping of food products and during food preparation. In addition, poisonous chemicals can also cause food-borne



diseases if they are present in food.

Thorough cooking is needed to destroy the bacteria, but when food is left out for more than two hours at room temperature, bacteria can multiply quickly. Most bacteria grow undetected because they don’t produce a bad odor; nor do these cause a change in the color or texture of the food. These microbes enter the body through the gastrointestinal tract, and often causes nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, dehydration and fever.

Food-borne diseases are largely preventable. Aquino recommended adequate hand washing especially in the kitchen where food is prepared. He also advised listeners to wash fruits and vegetables in running water before cutting, and to keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from all ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination. Cutting boards and utensils should also be cleaned thoroughly.

In case of hospitalization due to food poisoning, Aquino reminded listeners to ensure that their premium contribution is updated and that the health care facility is PhilHealth-accredited to guarantee availment of benefits. He also reminded member-patients to request doctors to always prescribe medicines that are listed in the Philippine National Drug Formulary or PNDF to facilitate reimbursement.

*PhilHealth Hataw sa Serbisyo airs every Friday, 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. over Radio DWIZ 882 KHz-AM. It is hosted by PhilHealth President and CEO Dr. Rey B. Aquino and is co-hosted by DWIZ News Director Ely Aligora and seasoned anchor Marou Pahati-Sarne. It can also be heard LIVE through [www.dwiz882.com](http://www.dwiz882.com).*

