

Be Aware of Important Recalls

By Janet Hackert, Nutrition Specialist

Good afternoon and welcome to Extension Connection, your connection to Missouri's land grant based research institutions. University Extension is the statewide outreach program of the University of Missouri system. This is Janet Hackert, Regional Nutrition Specialist with today's program.

Mid January is a time for recalls – returning or exchanging Christmas gifts for the right size or color, or rescinding or revising a new year's resolution. But some recalls are even more important and knowing about them can mean the difference between life and death.

Products are often recalled when they are either physically unsafe (like a young child's garment or toy that pose a choking hazard) or are unsafe to eat (because they contain salmonella, botulism or some other food-borne pathogen). But knowing about these before they cause harm is essential to staying safe. According to a Consumer Reports poll, only one in five Americans is "aware that they purchased a recalled product, medicine, or food within the last three years."

Two web sites can help keep consumers informed and safe.

The National School Safety Coalition has brought together organizations concerned about children's well-being and created a web site at www.clickcheckandprotect.org. This site, sponsored by Consumer Reports, offers information on the latest recalls. They are especially ones that affect children, but will be of interest to adults as well, with such products as children's garments, dehumidifiers, alcohol swabs and a variety of food items.

The other site is specific to foods that have been recalled. The site is the Food Safety Inspection Service at www.fsis.usda.gov. The link for specific recalls is on the left hand side under Browse by Subject. The FSIS reports recalls and public health alerts that involve meat, poultry, or processed egg products.

On both sites, information is given on how to identify the item and the particular lot that is affected. These resources also indicate what to do with the item – either to return the product for a refund, destroy the food and bring the label to the store for a safe replacement, or whatever the recommendation is. Also at both sites there is an opportunity to sign up for e-mail notification when new recalls are issued.

For more information on this or any other subject, contact your local University of Missouri Extension office. MU Extension programs are open to all.

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