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FOOD POISONING RESEARCH CONTINUES AT UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

MISSOULA --

Put those left-overs in the refrigerator, advises a University of Montana researcher, or they may put you in the hospital.

The Missoula school's microbiology department has received \$19,862 as the second installment of a three-year grant from the U.S. Public Health Service for study of clostridium perfringens food poisoning.

Department Chairman and research team leader Dr. M. Nakamura explains that this type of food poisoning is common particularly in the summer months when meat and poultry dishes with sauces or gravies are allowed to remain at warm temperatures for several hours. Without refrigeration, the doctor says, bacteria begin to multiply, producing billions of cells per gram of food.

Dr. Nakamura believes that every year hundreds of thousands of food poisoning cases either are unreported or misdiagnosed and he attributes most to clostridium perfringens. A reliable method of preventing the disease, he says, is prompt refrigeration of left-over meat dishes, particularly those containing gravies or sauces such as stew and chili.

If food is left out and then eaten without further cooking, the symptoms of perfringens food poisoning--diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, nausea and weakness--may occur within eight to twelve hours, the doctor explains. However, he says, the disease usually subsides within a few days and generally does not result in death.

Dr. Nakamura's team is investigating the possible role of bacteria as toxin producers. The results of a preliminary survey indicate that certain foods are

(more)

heavily contaminated by food-poisoning bacteria, the doctor says.

Another phase of the study is investigation of heat-resistance in bacteria spores. Some spores resist several hours of boiling, the researchers have found, indicating that ordinary cooking or simmering do not destroy completely the disease-causing bacteria.

Dr. Nakamura's research team comprises James D. Converse, a graduate of Carroll College; Mrs. Katherine Kelly, a graduate of the University of California at Davis; William Cross, a graduate of Eastern Washington State College, and Judith Schulze, a graduate of Valparaiso University.