

The World Health Organization exposes myths about foodborne disease

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At the 6th World Congress of Science Journalists, epidemiologist Dr Claudia Stein from the World Health Organization explained why food safety matters and exposed eleven myths about foodborne diseases:

Myths about foodborne diseases

1. Foodborne diseases are mostly a problem in developing countries
2. Foodborne diseases in rich countries are mostly travel-related
3. Our food is safe
4. Foodborne diseases are getting less & less frequent
5. It's imported foods from poor countries ('poor hygiene') that cause our foodborne diseases
6. Foodborne diseases are mild, self-limited and of short duration
7. As a vegetarian I am less likely to get foodborne diseases
8. Governments hold the sole responsibility for making food safer
9. Food security is more important than food safety
10. Food safety is a luxury that only rich countries can afford
11. We can never estimate the burden of foodborne diseases

Claudia Stein MD, MSc, PhD, FFPH is a German trained public health physician and epidemiologist with the World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, which she has been serving since 1998, most recently in the Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases (FOS).

Claudia qualified from Medical School in Germany in 1989. Her area of post-graduate training include a residency in Internal Medicine in the United Kingdom, a Master's degree in Public Health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, a PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Southampton (MRC Environmental Epidemiology Unit), UK, and a further residency in Public Health Medicine with Specialist Certification at the Faculty of Public Health of the Royal College of Physicians, London, UK. Prior to joining WHO she worked for several years as public health physician and epidemiologist at country level in Europe, as well as for two years in India and China (the latter two under the auspices of the Medical Research Council, MRC).

In her current position, Claudia serves as medical epidemiologist in the area of foodborne diseases and surveillance and leads the WHO Initiative to Estimate Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases.

References in this podcast

1. WHO's Five keys to safer food can be downloaded [here](#)



2. [WHO's Foodborne Disease Burden Epidemiology Reference Group](#)

3. Kate E. Jones, Nikkita G. Patel, Marc A. Levy, Adam Storeygard, Deborah Balk, John L. Gittleman & Peter Daszak (2008) Nature 451, 990-993 [Global trends in emerging infectious diseases](#)