

SHORT SUBJECTS

WE NEED THE USDA (US Department of Agriculture): Salmonella contamination of ground turkey sickened people in 26 states since March, killing one Sacramento resident. The Salmonella strain was resistant to antibiotics and could have killed even more. Investigation by the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service identified the source as an Arkansas production plant of the country's largest poultry producer, Cargill.

I shudder at the prospect of federal budget cuts that would reduce the capability of tracing a food contamination source and stopping it in its tracks. Without the USDA investigation, Cargill wouldn't have known and the recall wouldn't have happened. The USDA Inspection Unit should be beefed up so that more frequent inspections could *prevent* more illnesses, not just track the source.

Consuming a Salmonella-contaminated product that was not cooked sufficiently to kill Salmonella can lead to diarrhea, abdominal cramps and fever within 8-72 hours. It can be life-threatening to some with weakened immune systems.¶

EAT BETTER, PLAY BETTER, DO BETTER AT SCHOOL?

For a cute article about feeding school children lunch after, rather than before, recess:
<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/25/play-then-eat-shift-may-bring-gains-at-school/>. ¶

WASH YOUR SPROUTS: A new, dangerous bacteria has hit Europe. The bacteria is a toxin-producing E. coli, that causes kidney failure and blood hemorrhaging. German officials traced its origin to bean and seed sprouts. It responds to antibiotics, but acts so fast that it might kill before antibiotics can be started. So wash your sprouts, even if it makes them soggy and limp.¶

DOES ACTOS CAUSE BLADDER CANCER? A Kaiser Permanente study showed that patients taking pioglitazone (Actos) for *more than two years* had slightly more bladder cancer than non-users. The increase is tiny. As Paul Harvey would say, the rest of the story is 1) the raw data show that the bladder cancer risk in any Actos user, for *any length of time*, was only

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half that of non-users; 2) we're talking about small rates of cancer, of 0.2% in Actos users and 0.4% in non-users; and 3) 95% of the cancers were detected at an early, treatable stage.

For perspective, Actos is the only diabetes drug in its class worth taking. Avandia (rosiglitazone) may still be on the market, but it does nothing for your cholesterol and may increase heart attacks. Actos actually reduces heart and vascular disease. Patients in the PRO-Active study who took Actos had a 2% reduction in death, heart attack, stroke and blocked arteries of the heart or leg.

When you are talking about reduction of vascular death and disease vs. a small increase in a treatable cancer, which would you choose? Very few diabetes medications actually reduce stroke and heart attack, so there aren't many alternatives.

For the record, not every diabetic can take Actos. It tends to cause fluid retention in patients who eat too much carbohydrate and have marginal cardiac pumping function, but does not itself damage the heart.¶