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NEWS ROOM

Don't worry! That burger is safe to eat!

Published by Woman's World

by Lisa Degnen

Scary news reports about mad cow disease-and now foot-and-mouth disease-can make anyone think twice about biting into a burger. But experts say there's absolutely no reason to worry. Here's why...

Have the reports of mad cow disease or the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease scared you off meat? In a recent survey, almost one in five Americans reported they've changed their eating habits because they're worried about these diseases-but experts say you don't have to be!

"They're not very common, and the danger has been overblown," says John Block, former Secretary of Agriculture and now president of Food Distributors International. Here's why you don't have to worry:

There have been no cases of mad cow disease in this country.

The problem is only in Europe-and since the U.S. has banned beef imported from countries that have had outbreaks, there probably never will be an outbreak here, say experts. And as an added measure, the USDA regularly monitors U.S. cattle herds for any disease.

Few people have gotten sick from mad cow disease.

Many livestock have been affected, but "only 90 people have ever had mad cow disease, and most of those cases were in the UK," says Block. And the risk is actually decreasing, with fewer cases being reported now than since the outbreak started 20 years ago. In addition, researchers now say there's no evidence that the disease had spread to lamb and mutton, as some reports have stated.

Foot-and-mouth disease doesn't make you sick.

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Foot-and-mouth disease is a virus that strikes animals such as cattle and sheep, causing sores on their hooves and mouth. And while experts say humans can carry the virus, it's rare that it will make them sick.

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