



NEWS RELEASE

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Summer Safety & Your Family: Summer Activities and Food Safety

Does foodborne illness increase during the summer months? The answer is “yes.” Microorganisms present throughout the environment in soil, air, water, and in the bodies of people and animals grow faster in the warm summer months. Bacteria also need moisture to flourish, and summer weather is often hot and humid. More people are cooking outside at picnics, barbecues, and on camping trips where thermostat-controlled cooking, refrigeration, and washing facilities are usually not available. You can Fight BAC![®] by following these four simple steps to safer food in the summertime:

Clean: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water before handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets.
- When eating away from home, find out if there’s a source of safe drinking water. If not, bring water for preparation and cleaning. Or pack clean, wet, disposable washcloths or moist towelettes and paper towels for cleaning hands and surfaces.

Separate: Don’t Cross-Contaminate

- When packing the cooler chest for an outing, wrap raw meats securely; avoid raw meat juices from coming in contact with ready-to-eat food.
- Wash plates, utensils, and cutting boards that held the raw meat or poultry before using again for cooked food.

Cook: Cook to Proper Temperature

- Cook meat and poultry completely at the picnic site. Partial cooking of food ahead of time allows bacteria to survive and multiply to the point that subsequent cooking cannot destroy them.
- Take your thermometer along. Cook hamburger patties to an internal temperature of 160° F. and ground poultry to 165° F.
- For a complete list of safe internal temperatures when cooking meat and poultry, call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854; for the hearing-impaired (TDD/TTY), call 1-800-256-7072; or log on to the FSIS website at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>

Chill: Refrigerate Promptly

- Cold refrigerated perishable food like luncheon meats, cooked meats, chicken, and potato or pasta salads should be kept in an insulated cooler packed with several inches of ice, ice packs, or containers of frozen water.
- Consider packing canned beverages in one cooler and perishable food in another cooler because the beverage cooler will probably be opened frequently.
- Keep the cooler in the coolest part of the car, and place in the shade or shelter, out of the sun, whenever possible.
- Preserve the cold temperature of the cooler by replenishing the ice as soon as it starts melting.
- If a cooler chest is not an option, consider taking fruits, vegetables, hard cheeses, canned or dried meats, dried cereal, bread, peanut butter, crackers, and a bottle of refreshing beverage.

- Take-out food: If you don't plan to eat take-out food within 2 hours of purchase, plan ahead and chill the food in your refrigerator before packing for your outing.
- Leftovers? Food left out of the refrigeration for more than 2 hours may not be safe to eat. When the temperature outside is above 90° F., food should not be left out over 1 hour. Play it safe; put leftover perishables back on ice once you finish eating so they do not spoil or become unsafe to eat.

Source: Food Safety and Inspection Service, Consumer Education and Information. "*Foodborne Illness Peaks In Summer – Why?*" Online: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov>, slightly revised April 2003.