

Summer Food Safety

Protect your family from food borne illness this summer by preparing, cooking, and storing your food properly.

Clean: Wash Hands and Surfaces Often

Unwashed hands are a prime cause of foodborne illness.

- Wash your hands with warm, 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

Cross-contamination during preparation, grilling, and serving food is a prime cause of foodborne illness.

- 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 Safe Temperatures

- Take your food thermometer along. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often browns very fast on the outside, so be sure that meats are cooked thoroughly. Check them with a food thermometer.
- Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.
- Cook all raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal to an internal temperature of 160 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
- Cook all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
- 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.

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.



Adapted from the USDA article "Foodborne Illness Peaks in Summer - Why?" Created by AmeriCorps member Amy Houser.

