

Don't Get Sick This Grilling Season!



Summer is the time for outdoor picnics, barbecues and unfortunately, food poisoning. Avoid getting sick by following these suggestions!

Eating outdoors in warm weather can be a food safety challenge. Bacteria in food multiply faster at temperatures between 40°F and 140°F. Knowing these 7 basic food safety tips will keep you safe this summer.

1. Wash hands.

“Hand washing is THE single most effective way to prevent the spread of disease,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It’s really simple – make sure to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. To help kids learn this, try singing the ABC song with them while

they wash. Cleaning up is especially important after using the bathroom and before cooking or eating. Oftentimes you find yourself outdoors with no bathroom in the summer. You can use a water jug, some soap and paper towels. Moist disposable towelettes are also good for cleaning your hands.

2. Keep raw food separate from cooked food.

You take the raw meat on a plate to the grill, right? But remember that you do not want to use that same plate to put the cooked meat on. This is known as cross contamination and can cause food-borne illness. Keep utensils and surfaces clean.

3. Marinate food in the refrigerator, not out on the counter.

Marinating can make meat tender and tasty. But if you want to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a separate portion. Don't reuse marinade that contained raw meat.

4. Cook food thoroughly.

A meat thermometer can really help in making sure meat is cooked to a safe temperature. Steaks should reach 145 degrees and then be allowed to rest for 3 minutes. Chicken should be cooked to at least 165°F. Hamburgers should be cooked to 160°F. If a thermometer is not available, make sure hamburgers are brown all the way through, not pink.

5. Refrigerate and freeze food right away.

It can be hard to remember while a party is going on, but food should not be left out of the cooler or off the grill for more than 2 hours. It's especially important to remember NOT to leave food out for more than one hour when the temperature is above 90°F.

6. Keep hot food hot.

Hot food should be kept at or above 140°F. Hot food should be wrapped well and placed in an insulated container – this will keep the heat in. If you have purchased something like fried

chicken at a deli, try to eat it within two hours. Bacteria multiply rapidly after that and can make you sick. Don't forget to pack your meat thermometer. When re-heating food, be sure it reaches 165°F.

7. Keep cold food cold.

Cold food should be held at or below 40°F. Think about potato salad and similar foods. Keep them on ice in a cooler and don't set them out for long periods of time in the heat.

Those are the basic tips to remember. If you have ever suffered from food-borne illness, you know how miserable it is. Follow these simple steps to keep your food safe and enjoy your summer barbecues and camping trips.

This article was written by Darlene Christensen



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References:

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Barbecue Basics: Tips to Prevent Foodborne Illness.
