

Summer Food Safety



FAMILY
GATHERINGS
&
FOOD SAFETY

LIVE WELL UTAH

Summer is the time for barbecues and picnics. The biggest party crasher at summer buffets is foodborne bacteria. You can't see them, you can't taste them – but you sure can feel them if illness occurs hours or days later.

Year after year, we offer the same advice: handle foods carefully in the summer because foodborne illness – also known as food poisoning – is more prevalent in warmer weather.

Foodborne illnesses increase during the summer, generally for two reasons.

First, there are natural causes. Bacteria are present throughout the environment in soil, air, water and in the bodies of people and animals. These microorganisms grow faster in the warm summer months. Most foodborne bacteria grow fastest at temperatures from 90 to 110 °F. Bacteria also need moisture to flourish, and summer weather is often hot and humid.

Given the right circumstances, harmful bacteria can quickly multiply on food to large numbers. When this happens, someone eating the food can get sick.

Second, there are the people causes for the upswing in summertime foodborne illnesses. Outside activities increase. More people are cooking outside at picnics, barbecues and on camping trips. The safety controls that a kitchen provides, such as thermostat-controlled cooking, refrigeration and washing facilities, are usually not available.

Fortunately, people seldom get sick from contaminated food because most people have a healthy immune system that protects them not only from harmful bacteria on food, but from other harmful organisms in the environment. We know foodborne illness increases in warm weather. We also know that consumers can Fight BAC!™ by following these four simple steps to safer

food in the summertime.

WASH – Unwashed hands are a prime cause of foodborne illness. Keep hands and surfaces clean. Rinse all fruits and vegetables before cutting or eating. When unable to wash, be sure to bring substitutes, such as washcloths and moist towels or paper towels to clean hands and surfaces with.

SEPARATE – Cross-contamination during preparation, grilling and serving food is a prime cause of foodborne illness. Keep raw and cooked foods separate, and wash surfaces before using them.

CHILL – Holding food at an unsafe temperature is a prime cause of foodborne illness.

Keep cold food cold. Keeping food cold is the number one concern when eating and cooking outdoors. Bacteria will multiply quickly. Never leave foods out for more than 1 hour in temperatures over 90 degrees. Store your ice chest in the shade and pack it with plenty of ice. You may need to discard leftovers. When in doubt, throw it out!

HEAT- Food safety experts agree that food is properly cooked when it is heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Take your thermometer along and cook to proper temperatures.

- Ground beef – 160 degrees
- Whole steaks and roasts -145 degrees
- Poultry – 180 degrees

You can enjoy summer picnics and parties, just remember to have safe and healthy food, not food that can cause foodborne illness. Always prepare and store food properly.

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