

Health Unit Media Release

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Barbecuing, Picnicking, Hiking & Camping Food Safety Tips: *Preventing foodborne illness*

Summer is a great time for barbeques, picnics and camping and of course, food is a big part of the fun. Safe outdoor cooking and eating is often a challenge.

Here are a few simple food safety tips for safe and enjoyable outdoor living.

1. Get off to a CLEAN start!

- Handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of foodborne illness. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before and after handling food.
- Follow the same handwashing rules outdoors as you do at home.
- Sanitize your preparation areas and utensils to reduce bacteria and prevent foodborne illness.
- Clean utensils, plates and trays after each use. Don't forget to wash and sanitize inside the cooler before and after each use.

2. CHILL out by the BBQ!

- Keep food cold at or below 4°C. It's best to keep perishable food in the fridge or cooler until you are ready to cook it or eat it. Bacteria can grow and "spoil" food left in the temperature danger zone (4° to 60°C) for more than two hours (One hour on hot summer days).
- When in doubt - throw it out! Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of your food.

Five easy "cooler safety" tips

1. **Take** perishable food in a cooler. Freezer ice packs work better because they drip less. Loose ice or cubes can melt, then drip and possibly transfer contaminants from one food to another. If you use loose ice, store everything in sealed containers to prevent cross-contamination! Frozen juice boxes make excellent ice packs for small lunch packs. Kids will love drinking the juice slush when the juice boxes thaw!
2. **Refrigerate** or freeze food, if possible, the day before you pack it. This way it's already cold when you put it in the cooler.
3. **Place** your cooler in the coolest part of your vehicle when you're travelling. On hot days, use the car's air conditioning, if you can, to keep food cold.
4. **Keep** the cooler out of the sun and keep the lid closed as often as you can. You may want to use two coolers – one for drinks (it may be opened more often) and one for food.
5. **Separate** raw food from cooked food. Place raw meat and poultry in sealed containers and pack them at the bottom of the cooler to keep their juices from dripping onto other food. Or better yet, pack raw meat in a separate cooler.

3. COOK safely!

- Have a digital food thermometer handy. Prevent foodborne illness by cooking food to a safe internal temperature. Food thermometers are the only way to cook foods safely without overcooking!
- Keep hot food hot at or above 60°C to prevent the growth of bacteria and reduce the chance of foodborne illness.

- By cooking your food to a safe internal temperature, you can destroy any harmful bacteria that might be present.
- Precook and chill meat at home when possible, and reheat on site to 74°C. This will help save time, prevent flaring and undercooking.

4. SEPARATE raw and cooked food!

- Raw food can cross-contaminate cooked food and cause foodborne illness. Keep raw and cooked food separate and covered.
- Have clean plates and cooking utensils ready. Never use the same plate, tray or utensils for raw and cooked food. Raw meat juices can spread bacteria to your safely cooked food and cause foodborne illness!
- To prevent raw meat, poultry or seafood from contaminating other food while you're preparing them, pack two sets of utensils and two cutting boards. Use one set for raw food and the other for ready-to-eat or cooked food. Bring a bag to store the used items to prevent them from cross-contaminating the clean items.

Six easy tips for safe leftovers

1. **Cool** food quickly to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria!
2. **Store** food in **shallow** containers. **Cover** containers when cool to prevent cross-contamination.
3. **Refrigerate as soon as possible!** If food is held in the danger zone (4°C to 60°C) for two hours or longer, don't keep it as leftovers. You can't tell if food is safe by looking, smelling or tasting it. Remember: when in doubt, **throw it out!**
4. **Do not** overstuff the fridge! Cold air needs to circulate around the food.
5. **Eat** properly handled leftovers within two to three days for best quality and safety. Reheat leftovers to 74°C.
6. **Freeze** leftovers right away if you don't think you'll eat them within two to three days.

Take care with drinking water!

Even when lakes and rivers look clean, the water may be dangerous to drink. Drink bottled water or tap water from a clean, safe source. (Remember to clean your water bottles and containers after each use!) Use only safe drinking water for washing food, washing dishes and brushing teeth. If required, you can purify water by boiling for one minute.

For more information on food safety this summer, visit our website at

<http://www.healthunit.org/foodsafety/factsheets/factsheets.htm> or call our Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 or go to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/tipcon/barbece.shtml> or <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/tipcon/picnice.shtml>