

# Beat the Heat! Summer Food Safety



Summer season is quickly approaching, and everyone is bolting outside to attend picnics, barbeque, camp and hike! As the weather continues to get warmer, people are at an increased risk of becoming ill due to food-borne pathogens, because bacteria tend to grow and multiply more quickly at higher summer temperatures. Following safe food handling guidelines will help you to have a healthy, active summer.

**Keep everything clean** by washing your hands thoroughly before handling food and before eating. Make sure all work surfaces, utensils and dishes are clean before you begin. Out and about? Bring moist towelettes or a damp wash cloth in a re-sealable bag.

**Keep cold food cold.** Only take perishable food items (e.g. meat, poultry, eggs and fish) out of the fridge right before placing it on the grill or in a cooler. [Packing a cooler](#) the appropriate way is important for keeping us healthy when eating outdoors. **Never eat the ice used in the cooler to pack food items or put the ice in your drinks** because the outside food-packaging could be contaminated with pathogens.

Do not forget the **DANGER ZONE**. Most bacteria do not grow rapidly at temperatures below 40° Fahrenheit or above 140° Fahrenheit.

**Separate** raw meats and poultry from all other foods to avoid cross-contamination. Do not use the same platters and utensils for raw and cooked meats.



**The two hour rule** specifies that perishable food left out for more than two hours (no more than one hour if the temperature is over 90° F) should be thrown away. Grilled foods left outside for over one hour should also be discarded.

**Preheat the grill** for at least 20 to 30 minutes prior to cooking.

**Cook completely** to ensure that the [minimum internal temperature and rest time](#) for all meat, fish and poultry is met. Heat destroys bacteria! Never partially grill meat or poultry and finish cooking later.

## Food safety tips for a multiple day backpacking trip:

- ◆ If you pack perishable foods, bring along frozen gel packs or freeze some box drinks to help keep it cold. Eat this food within the first day.
- ◆ Bring a food thermometer!
- ◆ Bring [light, non-perishable food items](#), and pack only the amount you will need in a small bag.
- ◆ Wash dishes immediately, before bacteria have a chance to grow.
- ◆ Purify all water from the wild no matter how pure and clean it may appear. [Safe methods](#) include boiling, purification tablets and water filters.

Eat Smart Program-Missoula City-County Health Department  
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