

Have a Food Safe Summer

Did you know that 1 in 6 Americans get food poisoning each year? Last year there were 128,000 people hospitalized and 3,000 deaths caused by contaminated foods. Foods become infected from organisms such as parasites, bacteria, and viruses. You may have a food-borne illness (food poisoning) if you experience an upset stomach, such as cramps, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, and dehydration (lack of fluids). These symptoms may range from mild to severe. This summer let's learn about how to keep your food clean from when you are packing

your food for a picnic to grilling and serving it to your company.



1. Clean

It is important to clean your hands, cooking surfaces (cutting boards, counter, table) and utensils in order to stop the spread of germs. Make sure to wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry. To clean your surfaces and utensils use paper towels or clean clothes to wipe up the surfaces or spills. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and counter tops with hot, soapy water. Washing your fruits and vegetables is just as important as washing your hands and cooking surfaces. Always wash your

produce before consuming. Do not wash meat, poultry or eggs as this can increase the risk of spreading bacteria.

2. Separate

While shopping make sure you are not spreading germs between foods in your grocery cart. Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods in your cart. Have the cashier place raw meat, poultry, and seafood in plastic bags to keep their juices from dripping on other foods. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separated in the refrigerator and on the bottom shelf to help stop the spread of germs.

3. Cook

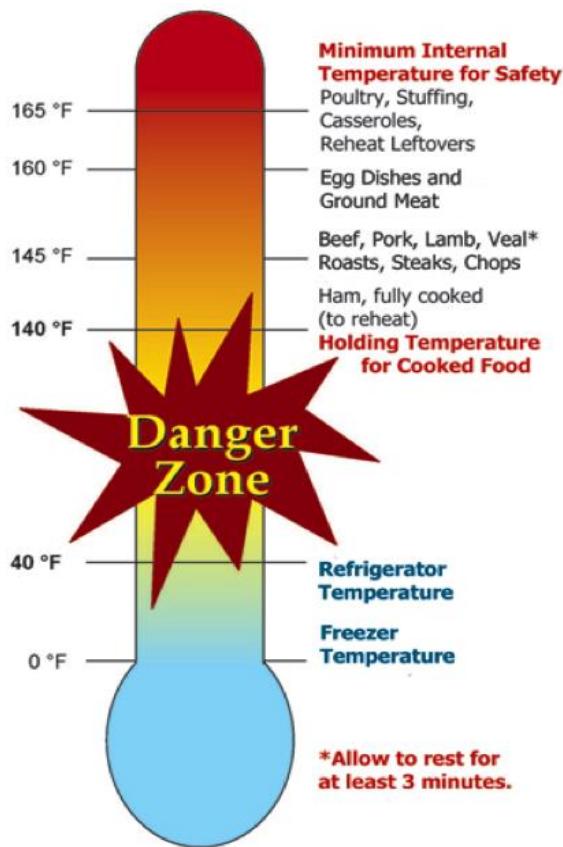
Have you heard of the "danger zone?" This is when foods are between 40° and 140° F. When foods are in this temperature range bacteria that cause food poisoning multiply quickly. The only way to be sure that your food is cooked through is to check using a food thermometer. When food is cooked to a high enough temperature this kills the harmful bacteria. Place the thermometer in the thickest part of the food to check its internal temperature. Compare your thermometer to the cooking temperatures chart to determine if it has reached a safe temperature. (See figure on second page.)

4. Chill

Refrigerate fresh foods within two hours and one hour in the summer time to keep your food safe. Being in cold temperatures slows down the growth bacteria that may cause food-borne illness. Your refrigerator should

be between 32° F and 40° F. For the fridge to chill food correctly the air must be able to flow throughout, and therefore it is important to not over stock your refrigerator. If freezing food, keep your freezer at 0° F or below.

Safe Cooking Minimum Cooking Temperatures



Resource: <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/foodnut/09300.html>

Use this picture and a food thermometer to determine if food is safe to eat. The color of meat is not the best way to determine doneness of foods.

Grilling Tips

#1 Refrigerate or freeze fresh meats and poultry as soon as possible after purchase.

#2 Refrigerate food promptly after cooking (within two hours; one hour if temperature is above 90° F)

#3 Keep Hot Food Hot. Food should be kept at 140°F or warmer until served.

#4 Keep Cold Food Cold. Meats and poultry should be kept refrigerated until ready to use. If using a cooler keep it out of the sunlight.

#5 Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling. You can use the refrigerator or microwave to help with defrosting. If using the microwave you must put the food on the grill immediately after being in the microwave.

#6 Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter. When using the marinade as sauces, make sure to leave some on the side before putting the raw meat into the marinade.

#7 Use a food thermometer to make sure meats have reached a safe minimum internal temperature.

#8 Smoking is cooking food indirectly in the presence of a fire. The temperature in the smoker should be maintained at 250° F to 300° F for safety.

#9 Use different platters and utensils for raw and cooked meat, poultry and seafood.

#10 Transporting foods cold minimizes bacterial growth.

What to do if you have food poisoning

Depending on the severity of your food poisoning symptoms, it may be necessary to call your doctor and/or seek emergency treatment. Symptoms of food poisoning include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramping, diarrhea, fever and dehydration.

The Bottom Line

The risk of food poisoning is increased in the summer time. When cold foods are not kept cold outside in the hot weather, dangerous bacteria can grow. Be smart this summer by washing your hands, chilling your foods properly, knowing your food temperatures, and grilling safely. When you take the time to do these simple steps, you will avoid spoiling your fun while eating outdoors. Have a happy food safe summer!

Need a Dietitian?

Registered Dietitians are here to help you with your nutrition questions. To make an appointment call 412.692.4497 (Oakland location) or 412.623.2421 (Shadyside location).