



## **SUMMER FOOD SAFETY**

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Do you become active and enjoy the outdoors during the summer months? Do you enjoy summer picnics and summer grilling? Before you pack your picnic basket for the park or fire up the grill for family and friends, be aware of safe grilling and food preparation practices so no one gets ill.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, an estimated 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses occur each year in the United States. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports foodborne illnesses peak during the summer months since microorganisms grow faster in the warm summer months and more people are cooking outside at picnics, barbecues, and on camping trips.

Don't let your summer fun become a nightmare for food safety. The American Dietetics Association recommends these simple food safety tips for safe summer food:

- Keep hot food hot and keep cold food cold
- Pack food in a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice or icepacks to keep temperature below 40 degrees F
- Keep raw foods separate from already prepared foods
- Transport the cooler in the back seat of your air-conditioned car instead of in your hot trunk and keep your cooler closed tight
- Bring moist towelettes or soap and water to clean your hands and surfaces often
- Remove from the cooler only the amount of raw meat, fish or poultry that will fit on the grill at one time
- Cook your favorite foods to the right temperature by using a meat thermometer; hamburger to at least 160 degrees F and chicken breasts to 170 degrees F
- Don't leave food outside in hot weather (90 degrees F or above) for more than one hour.

Take extra precautions with food safety when you get ready for a backyard barbecue or picnic. Remember to keep it clean when cooking or eating outdoors. Your guests should remember the fun they had at your picnic, not being sick the next few days.

For more information, contact a registered dietitian at [www.eatrightwv.org](http://www.eatrightwv.org).