

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summertime and the Eating is Easy!

Coldwater, MI. Corn on the Cob.... hamburgers on the grill.... potato and macaroni salads....Just the mention of these yummy foods invokes thoughts of summer. The warmer weather conditions may be ideal for outdoor picnics and barbecues, but they also provide a perfect environment for bacteria and other pathogens in food to multiply rapidly and cause foodborne illness. To make sure your summer picnics and back yard barbeques are enjoyed by all, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency reminds residents that during warm weather, it is especially important to take extra precautions and practice safe food handling.

According to Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director for the tri-county agency, "Many summer recipes call for preparing perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, mayonnaise, salad dressings and fresh fruits. Improper cleaning, prepping and storage of these food items, either alone or in combination, as in a potato salad recipe, can quickly lead to foodborne illness outbreaks. This is something to avoid!" She suggests the following food safety practices to reduce your chances of causing a foodborne illness:

1. **Wash, Wash, Wash Your Hands.** Always wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Sing Row, Row, Row Your Boat twice to get a sense of how long you should wash
2. **Marinating Mandate.** Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. Reserve a portion of the unused marinade to use as a sauce.

3. **Hot, Hot, Hot.** When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
4. **Temperature Gauge.** Use a food thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
5. **Where's the Beef? Chicken and Fish?** Hamburgers should be cooked to 160 °F, while large cuts of beef such as roasts and steaks may be cooked to 145 °F for medium rare or to 160 °F for medium. Poultry must reach a temperature of 165 °F. Fish should be opaque and flake easily and reach an internal temperature of 145 °F.
6. **Keep it Cold.** Add dressings that contain eggs (i.e., mayonnaise, salad dressings) to your salads at the very last minute before serving and refrigerate all ingredients prior to assembly. Refrigerate after serving, or place the serving bowl in an ice bath and never leave out for longer than an hour or two.
7. **Scrub and Rinse.** In addition to washing your hands, be sure to wash your fruits and vegetables. Scrub produce that has a thick, rough skin or rind (such as cantaloupe or potatoes) or has visible dirt on the surface using a clean vegetable scrubber. Rinse leaves of leafy vegetables (such as lettuce, spinach and cabbage) individually under running water. Even packaged salads, slaw mixes and other prepared produce, even when marked pre-washed, should be rinsed again under running water. Make sure that once fruits and vegetables have been sliced, diced or chopped, keep refrigerated.
8. **Stay Away from that Same Old Plate.** When taking foods off the grill, do not put cooked food items back on the same plate that held raw food, unless it has been washed with hot water and soap first. And in hot weather (above 90°F) foods should never sit out for more than one hour before going in the refrigerator.
9. **Icebox Etiquette.** A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to ensure a constant cold temperature. Keep the cooler out of the direct sun. Keep drinks in a separate cooler from foods. The beverage cooler will be opened frequently while the food cooler stays cold.

By following these simple, food safety tips you can help to ensure healthy, happy summer memories are made by all! To learn more food safety tips or to learn more about the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency's Environmental Health Public Health Food Program, just visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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