



News Release

For immediate release: July 10, 2013

(13-101)

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Don't let foodborne illness ruin your summer picnic or barbecue

OLYMPIA — Hot summer temperatures and meals served outside can be a recipe for illness if outdoor chefs don't follow a few basic guidelines to keep outside eating healthy and safe.

“It's harder to keep food at safe temperatures when it's hot outside and we eat food away from home,” said Food Safety Program Manager Dave Gifford. “If you plan your picnic or barbecue so that food is stored and cooked at the correct temperatures and served safely, you can avoid food-related illnesses.”

[Foodborne illnesses](#) can range from mild nausea to a serious condition that requires medical attention. Young children, the elderly, and people who have a weakened immune system are at higher risk to get severely ill.

Making sure you wash your hands thoroughly and often during food preparation is one of many ways to ensure that foods served outdoors are safe to eat. State health officials also recommend storing ready-to-eat foods separately from raw meat to prevent contamination, preparing meat for barbecues at home using clean utensils, and washing fruits and vegetables before slicing and serving.

When packing for an outdoor picnic or barbecue, make sure to bring a food thermometer to ensure meats are cooked to a safe temperature; a cooler with plenty of ice to keep cold foods cold; and disposable wet-wipes, paper towels, and garbage bags for cleaning up.

Barbequed meat might look done, but only a food thermometer can show you if the food is safe.

Recommended cooking temperatures:

- Ground beef and hamburger - 160 degrees Fahrenheit
- Hot dogs - 165 degrees Fahrenheit

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- Steaks and roasts - 145 Fahrenheit
- Chicken breasts - 165 degrees Fahrenheit
- Fish - 145 degrees Fahrenheit
- Pork - 160 degrees Fahrenheit

Food that has been kept chilled at 41 degrees or below and whole fruits, bakery items, chips, and unopened drinks can be used later. Throw away prepared food such as barbecued meat, salad, melon, and sandwiches that have been sitting out for more than two hours.

Extra food should be kept cold in a cooler that's stored in the shade. Food left in a car, on a table, or in a picnic basket for more than two hours should be thrown out.

More [barbecue and picnic food safety tips](#) are available online.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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