



Food Borne Illness Peaks in Summer:

Practice Picnic Food Safety

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Picnic and barbecue season offers lots of opportunities for outdoor fun with family and friends. But these warm weather events also present opportunities for foodborne bacteria to thrive. As food heats up in summer temperatures, bacteria multiply rapidly.

To protect yourself, your family, and friends from foodborne illness during warm-weather months, safe food handling when eating outdoors is critical. Read on for simple food safety guidelines for transporting your food to the picnic site, and preparing and serving it safely once you've arrived.

Pack and Transport Food Safely

Keep your food safe: from the refrigerator/freezer — all the way to the picnic table.

- Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be stored at 40 °F or below to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen so that they stay colder longer.
- Organize cooler contents. Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another. That way, as picnickers open and reopen the beverage cooler to replenish their drinks, the perishable foods won't be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.
- Keep coolers closed: Once at the picnic site, limit the number of times the cooler is opened as much as you can. This helps to keep the contents cold longer.
- Don't cross-contaminate. Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating prepared/cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.
- Clean your produce. Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them in the cooler — including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skinned fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water. Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel. Packaged fruits and vegetables that are labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.

[Read more here](#) Handling Food Safely While Eating Outdoors.