



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Follow Food Safety Tips for Holiday Cookouts & Picnics; And Mask Up at Crowded Events**

*Dangerous Bacteria Can Thrive at Unsafe Temperatures, Cause Serious Foodborne Illnesses*

**SPRINGFIELD** – With the arrival of the Memorial Day Holiday Weekend and grilling season underway, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding those who are grilling out or packing a picnic that there are basic food safety tips every family should follow in order to reduce the chance of getting a foodborne illness.

In addition, with COVID-19 case rates rising and many counties in Illinois at either [High or Medium Community Level](#), holiday hosts should take additional precautions to protect guests. If you are hosting a gathering, try to have as many activities outside as weather permits. If gathering indoors, try to increase air flow by opening windows for fresh air, or using a portable air cleaner. And anyone who is immunocompromised should wear a well-fitting mask or respirator around large crowds.

“With the Memorial Day holiday weekend upon us, this is a time for friends and family to gather and we want everyone to enjoy the season – and honor our fallen soldiers - safely,” said IDPH Acting Director Amaal Tokars. “If you are hosting a cookout or a picnic, the most important thing is to keep cold food cold, and hot food should be cooked to the proper temperature to avoid foodborne illnesses. If you are in areas with higher community risk levels, masking up in indoor public places and avoiding crowded indoor spaces as much as possible is recommended, especially for those who are at risk of serious outcomes.”

#### **Food Safety:**

It can be difficult to keep food cold during warm weather, especially while picnicking or traveling. Keep meat, poultry, and seafood refrigerated until ready to grill. When transporting, keep foods 40°F or below in an insulated cooler. One tip to help keep your cooler below 40°F is to pack beverages in one cooler and food in another. The cooler with the beverages will likely

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be opened more frequently, causing the temperature inside the cooler to fluctuate. You can also keep coolers in the shade and out of the direct sun.

To guard against cross-contamination, food should be kept separate. Raw meat and poultry should be separate from fruits, vegetables, cheeses, salads, and even cooked foods.

Before grilling, thaw food safely in the refrigerator, cold water, or microwave. Always marinate food in the refrigerator, no matter what kind of marinade you're using. Never thaw or marinate meat, poultry, or seafood on the counter. Harmful germs can multiply very quickly at room temperature.

When grilling, make sure food is cooked to a safe temperature by using a food thermometer. Follow these temperature guidelines to ensure grilled food is safe for consumption:

- 145°F – whole cuts of beef, pork, lamb, and veal
- 145°F – fish
- 160°F – hamburgers and other ground beef
- 165°F – all poultry and pre-cooked meats, like hot dogs

Throw out marinades and sauces that have touched raw meat juices, which can spread germs to cooked foods. Use clean utensils and a clean plate when you take cooked food off the grill.

After the meal, divide leftovers into small portions and place in covered, shallow containers. Make sure all leftovers are kept in the freezer or fridge or on ice within two hours after cooking, or one hour if the temperature is above 90°F.

And know the symptoms of most types of food poisoning, which include severe cramps, fever, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea. Symptoms can begin from 30 minutes to three or more days after eating contaminated food. If symptoms are severe or last longer than two days, contact a doctor or health care provider.

More food safety tips and information about foodborne illnesses and symptoms can be found on the [CDC Food Safety website](#).

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