

## **STATE HEALTH OFFICIALS OFFER FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR A SAFER SUMMER**

**INDIANAPOLIS** - During the summer months, many Hoosiers will be celebrating with family and friends by sharing meals. As a result, state health officials are offering some timely food safety tips.

“The single best way to prepare and consume food safely is to wash your hands before cooking, serving, or eating,” said Scott Gilliam, of the Indiana State Department of Health’s Food Protection Program. “Make sure to wash your hands thoroughly after touching raw meat, like ground beef or poultry.”

“Food temperature is also important,” Gilliam said. “If a food is intended to be served hot, make sure to cook it fully before serving it. On the other hand, if a food is intended to be served cold, keep it cold. Never let cold food sit out for an extended period of time. If you’re serving cold pasta salad, store it in a refrigerator or a cooler and put it out on the picnic table right before the food is served.”

According to Gilliam, another effective technique to avoid food-borne illness is to buy a good meat thermometer and use it to make sure that meat is cooked to its appropriate temperature.

“Ground beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 155 degrees for at least 15 seconds, pork should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees for at least three minutes, and poultry should be cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees for at least 15 seconds,” Gilliam said.

If you don’t have a meat thermometer, cook meats until the juices run clear. Ground beef should be brown or at least brownish pink in the center before it is served.

Gilliam also warned people who are experiencing nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or sore throat with fever or jaundice should not handle food or utensils.

“Try to minimize the direct handling of ready-to-eat foods with bare hands as much as possible,” Gilliam said. “Use utensils whenever possible when handling salads, sandwiches, etc.”

Health officials also recommend the following food safety tips:

- Food safety begins with hand-washing even in outdoor settings. And it can be as simple as using a water jug, some soap and paper towels.
- Keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.
- When grocery shopping during hot weather, make perishables your last pick-up in the store. Never leave them in the car while you run other errands—it doesn’t take long for bacteria to grow. Get perishables home and into the refrigerator immediately.
- Thaw meat or poultry safely by leaving it overnight in the refrigerator. Don’t leave meat or poultry out on the counter for an extended period of time before you prepare it.
- Don’t use the same platter and utensils that previously held raw meat or seafood to serve cooked meats and seafood.

- Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Don't reuse marinade.
- When it's time to cook the food, cook it thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to be sure. For additional information on proper food temperatures, visit the Indiana State Department of Health Web site at: [Indiana State Department of Health](#)
- Cook chicken and seafood until the flesh is solid.
- Don't leave leftovers on the picnic table or allow foods to cool on the kitchen counter. Put foods directly into the refrigerator within two hours of serving. If you divide large quantities of leftovers into smaller portions, they will chill more quickly to temperatures that inhibit the growth of bacteria.
- Make sure to cook eggs until both the white and the yolk are firm.
- Keep cold food cold. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be held at or below 40 F.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed," or "triple washed" need not be washed.