

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Don't Ruin Your Summer Fun with Food Poisoning

Summer is here and that means outdoor cookouts, camping, and summer fun. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) would like to take this time to remind everyone to keep their food safe to eat and reduce the risk of food poisoning. About 1 in 4 of all disease investigations done by SWNPHD are related to gastrointestinal illnesses, including food poisoning.

Follow these simple food safety tips to keep your meals safe and your family healthy all summer long.

- **CLEAN:** Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after handling food. Clean dishes, cutting boards, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- **CHILL:** Keep the perishable foods cold (below 40 degrees). Use ice packs or insulated coolers at picnics or while traveling. Pack coolers with plenty of ice, keep them in the shade, and avoid opening them too often.
- **COOK:** Use a food thermometer to ensure food is cooked long enough to kill the germs that cause food poisoning. For chicken that is 165 degrees, ground beef is 160 degrees, hot dogs and leftovers are 165 degrees, and fish is 145 degrees.
- **SEPARATE:** Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood away from ready-to-eat foods. Use separate cutting boards and utensils. Never re-use marinades used on raw meat.

Follow the 2-hour rule and refrigerate or toss leftovers within 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is over 90 degrees). Be cautious with deli meats and cheeses, cut melons and tomatoes, deviled eggs, and side salads that contain mayo. Mayonnaise-based salads are at high risk for bacterial growth; when they get warm they are a perfect environment for bacteria like salmonella, listeria, and E. coli.

“Remember the saying: When in Doubt, Throw it Out,” explains Lori Rowley, Public Health Nurse at SWNPHD. “Going over a few quick reminders when you are getting ready for summer activities can keep the fun going and prevent food poisoning: Use food thermometers. Keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Store leftovers promptly.”

Contact the Public Health Nurses at 308-345-4223 for more information on food safety and foodborne illnesses. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Instagram or visit swhealth.ne.gov.

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