

# Food Safety for Families

## Picnics and Summer Cookouts

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Dear Parents,

Cookouts and picnics are summertime traditions; a time for family and friends to gather, socialize and have fun. Summer outings can be ruined if safe food handling and preparation practices are not used. Hot summer temperatures can help foodborne bacteria multiply at a rapid rate, spoiling food and causing illness. To prevent illness from occurring, take food safety on your picnic.



- ◆ **Keep cut fruit cold.** Many people do not know that tomatoes and melons, such as watermelon and cantaloupe, can cause foodborne illness. *Salmonella* and *Shigella* (common causes of foodborne illness) are often present on the rind or peel. Wash melons or tomatoes thoroughly before cutting. Refrigerate cut pieces immediately. Melons and tomatoes are not high in acid and can support the growth of harmful bacteria. People have become sick from melons and tomatoes that have not been kept cold.



### Preparing Food Safely

- ◆ **Wash hands before handling food.** Hands should be washed for 15 seconds using warm, soapy water.
- ◆ **Use clean utensils and containers.** Dirty hands, utensils, containers and any work surfaces can contaminate food with harmful bacteria and viruses which can cause illness.
- ◆ **Only prepare foods for the day of your picnic.** Cooking foods in advance allows for more opportunities for bacteria to grow. Cooked foods need to be rapidly cooled in shallow pans. Spread the food out in as many pans as is needed so that food is no more than 2-3 inches deep. Frozen foods can be used if thawed in the refrigerator. Consider taking food prepared from a deli, such as pre-fried chicken or potato salad.
- ◆ **Keep mayonnaise-based foods cold.**

### Packing For Safety

- ◆ **Keep cold foods cold.** Keep cold food at 40°F or colder to prevent bacteria from growing. Pack cold foods in a sturdy, insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Freeze your own blocks of ice in clean milk cartons or plastic containers for use in the cooler. Put food in water-proof containers or wrap food in plastic wrap or aluminum foil to keep foods from getting soggy. Surround food with ice inside the cooler. If using frozen gel packs or containers of homemade ice, place them between packages of food. **Never set containers of food on top of ice.** The trunk of your car can reach temperatures of **150°F**. Transport coolers in the passenger area of your car. When you arrive at the picnic site, put a blanket over the cooler and place it in the shade to keep the food cold. Keep the cooler closed until you are ready to eat.



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### FightBac!®



Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems.

- ◆ **Keep hot foods hot.** Keep hot foods at 140°F or higher to prevent harmful bacteria from growing. Take-out food or food cooked just before going to the picnic can be carried hot. Wrap hot foods in towels or newspaper, and place inside a box or heavy paper bag. Keep these foods warm on a grill or use within 1 hour.
- ◆ If you cannot keep cold food cold and hot food hot, take foods that do not need refrigeration:
  - Chips or crackers
  - Peanut butter
  - Unopened cans of food: meat, fish, fruit, salsa
  - Peanut butter and/or jelly sandwiches
  - Dried fruit, nuts, unpeeled fresh fruit (apples, oranges, bananas, etc.)
  - Cookies and cakes
- ◆ **Bring soap if water is available.** Pack moist towelettes and hand sanitizer if your picnic site does not have hand washing facilities available.
- ◆ **Pack plenty of utensils and dishware.** Bring serving utensils for each dish to prevent contamination. Consider using disposable plates and plastic ware.



### Cooking Food at the Picnic

- ◆ **Wash hands before handling food and use clean utensils and containers.** Never use utensils that have touched raw meats on any other food item.



- ◆ **Thoroughly cook food at one time.** Partially cooked food causes bacteria to grow without being killed by enough heat.



- ◆ **Remember your food thermometer!** The color of the meat or its juice is not a reliable indicator to doneness. Always use a clean food thermometer to check the internal temperature of your food.

### Serving Food at your Picnic

- ◆ **Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold!** Do not let foods sit for more than **1 hour**. Plan preparation so food is eaten shortly after it is cooked. Any leftovers should be put back in the cooler right after they are served. The longer food is held at unsafe temperatures the more likely that bacteria can grow and cause foodborne illness.



### Handling Leftovers

- ◆ **If picnic leftovers have been sitting out for more than 1 hour, throw them out!** The more time that food has been sitting at unsafe temperature, the more likely harmful bacteria has grown.
- ◆ **Cold foods kept in a cooler that still has ice are safe.** If the ice has melted, throw out any food that should be kept cold.