

NEWS RELEASE – 1st in series

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Summer Food Safety Tips

McCook – Summer is here! This means backyard barbecues and hot, sunny days! Spending time together with friends and family is important and safety of your loved ones is just as important. Following are some common summer food preparation and handling tips to prevent contamination and illness,” states Jamey Keen, Public Health Nurse. “Temperature abuse during food preparation or cross-contamination during food handling are the most important risk factors.”

Salmonella is a bacterial disease that can cause sudden onset of headache, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea and sometimes vomiting. Dehydration is especially common in infants and the elderly and may be severe. Ingestion of the germs that cause salmonella from food derived from infected animals, contaminated feces or poop of an infected animal or person.

Common food sources include contaminated raw and undercooked eggs/egg products, raw milk/milk products, contaminated water, meat/meat products, poultry/poultry products, and contaminated produce such as lettuce. Contact with infected animals may also lead to infection. Salmonella can also be spread by person-to-person or by the fecal to oral route such as going to the bathroom and not washing your hands properly and then putting them into your mouth.

Centers for Disease Control recommendations include:

Shopping

- Purchase refrigerated or frozen items after selecting your non-perishables.
- Never choose meat or poultry in packaging that is torn or leaking.
- Do not buy food past "Sell-By," "Use-By," or other expiration dates.

Storage

- Always refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F).
- Check the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer with an appliance thermometer. The refrigerator should be at 40 °F or below and the freezer at 0 °F or below.
- Cook or freeze fresh poultry, fish, ground meats, and variety meats within 2 days; other beef, veal, lamb, or pork, within 3 to 5 days.
- Perishable food such as meat and poultry should be wrapped securely to maintain quality and to prevent meat juices from getting onto other food.

- To maintain quality when freezing meat and poultry in its original package, wrap the package again with foil or plastic wrap that is recommended for the freezer.
- In general, high-acid canned food such as tomatoes, grapefruit, and pineapple can be stored on the shelf for 12 to 18 months. Low-acid canned food such as meat, poultry, fish, and most vegetables will keep 2 to 5 years — if the can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean, and dry place. Discard cans that are dented, leaking, bulging, or rusted.

Preparation

- Always wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other food. After cutting raw meats, wash cutting board, utensils, and countertops with hot, soapy water.
- Cutting boards, utensils, and countertops can be sanitized by using a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water.
- Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the refrigerator.

Thawing

- **Refrigerator:** The refrigerator allows slow, safe thawing. Make sure thawing meat and poultry juices do not drip onto other food.
- **Cold Water:** For faster thawing, place food in a leak-proof plastic bag. Submerge in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook immediately after thawing.
- **Microwave:** Cook meat and poultry immediately after microwave thawing.

Cooking

Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.

Ground meats: Cook all raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal to an internal temperature of 160 °F as measured with a food thermometer.

Poultry: Cook all poultry to an internal temperature of 165 °F as measured with a food thermometer.

Serving

- Hot food should be held at 140 °F or warmer.
- Cold food should be held at 40 °F or colder.
- When serving food at a buffet, keep food hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays. Keep food cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice or use small serving trays and replace them often.
- Perishable food should not be left out more than 2 hours at room temperature (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F).

Leftovers

- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature was above 90 °F).
- Place food into shallow containers and immediately put in the refrigerator or freezer for rapid cooling.
- Use cooked leftovers within 4 days.
- Reheat leftovers to 165 °F.

Additional resources can be found at the Center for Disease Control's website at: <http://www.cdc.gov>.

If you have questions, please contact Public Health Nurse, Jamey Keen at nurse@swhealth.ne.gov, review our web site at <http://www.swhealth.ne.gov>, call the office at 308-345-4223 or visit us at 404 West 10th Street – one block north of Arby's.

SWNPHD is on Facebook and Twitter. The health department serves Chase, Dundy, Hayes, Hitchcock, Frontier, Furnas, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

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