



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Region IV Public Health**  
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Wahkiakum Counties  
and Cowlitz Tribe

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Contact: Dr. Jennifer Vines, Region IV Deputy Health Officer  
(360) 852-6508; [jennifer.vines@clark.wa.gov](mailto:jennifer.vines@clark.wa.gov)

**Keep food safe when temperatures rise**  
*Tips for summertime food safety*

Sunny, warm temperatures predicted for the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend guarantee that outdoor picnics and barbeques will be part of the festivities in Southwest Washington. But as the temperature rises, so can the number of people who fall ill from food that's improperly prepared or stored.

"Almost everyone enjoys eating outdoors in warm weather. We need to remember that summer heat promotes the growth of bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses," said Dr. Jennifer Vines, Region IV Deputy Health Officer. "That's why it's important to take extra precautions when preparing and serving food outdoors, away from the convenience of refrigeration and hot running water."

Here are some food safety guidelines for eating outdoors this summer:

**Wash hands to reduce the spread of bacteria**

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after you handle food, especially raw meat.
- If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.

**Prepare food at home**

- If possible, prepare food at home where soap and running water are available.
- Use separate utensils, cutting boards and dishware for raw meat and don't allow raw meat juices to contaminate other food.
- Wash whole uncut fruits, including melons, and vegetables. Use running water.

**Store food safely**

- If refrigeration is unavailable, store food in an insulated cooler with sufficient ice or ice packs to keep the food at 40 °F or below. Keep the cooler in the shade.
- Throw away prepared food that sits out for more than two hours.
- Marinate food in the refrigerator, not on the counter.
- Store raw meats in watertight containers separately from other foods.
- Keep fruits and vegetables cold until eaten.

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**Thaw safely**

- Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling so it cooks more evenly.
- Use the refrigerator for slow, safe thawing.
- You can microwave defrost if the food will be placed immediately on the grill.

**Use a thermometer to ensure meats are cooked thoroughly. Recommended temperatures:**

- Ground beef, hamburgers, egg dishes, and pork - 160 °F.
- Steaks, roasts, and fish - 145 °F.
- Hot dogs, chicken breasts, ground chicken and turkey, casseroles, stuffing - 165 °F.

Serve hot foods immediately after cooking. Use a clean plate for foods that come off the grill rather than reusing the plate that held raw meat.

For more information on food safety, refer to the Washington Department of Health Web site <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/> or the United States Department of Agriculture's food safety program (<http://www.isitdoneyet.gov>).

When carrying food to another location, keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth. Use an insulated cooler with sufficient ice or ice packs to keep the food at 40 °F or below. Pack food right from the refrigerator into the cooler immediately before leaving home.

**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND  
**HEALTHIER COMMUNITY**