

Hot Dogs on Hot Days: Food Safety Tips for the Summer

(From June 2012 newsletter)

While food safety is always crucial to avoid foodborne illness, the CDC stresses that even more precautions should be made in the summer. Bacteria such as salmonella, E. coli, campylobacter, and listeria all grow more rapidly at warm temperatures, flourishing the most when it is 90 degrees (F) or more outside. Between picnics and pool parties, it is common for food to be left out longer than the recommended hour on hot days. [Here are some tips/The following are some tips] from MSN Health to eat safe in every setting all summer.

The basic rule: “Hot foods should be kept hot and cold foods should be kept cold.”

- Avoid leaving food in the “danger zone” between 40 - 140 degrees F for more than two hours, or one hour if it is 90 degrees or hotter.

At the supermarket:

- **Keep raw meat/seafood on the bottom shelf** of your grocery cart to minimize the risk of puncture or dripping. **Avoid leaky packaging** (which can cross-contaminate other food), and have them wrapped in their own bag when checking out.
- **Make sure chilled food is cold** and freezer food is frozen solid.
- Only buy pre-sliced fruits and vegetables when sold in a **refrigerated case**.
- **Add perishable items to the cart last** before checking out, and put them in the backseat of vehicles instead of the hotter trunk. Bring a cooler if you will be driving more than half an hour.

At home:

- **Put hot food in the fridge immediately** (instead of letting it cool first).
- **Marinate meat in fridge**, and only baste with marinade that held raw meat if it is brought to a **boil for at least five minutes**.

- **Wash fruits and vegetables, but NOT raw meat**, as juices containing bacteria can splatter. And **avoid/cut off bruises** on produce, as they are havens for bacteria.
- **Do not thaw meat on the counter** – defrost it in the fridge, microwave, or in cold water that is changed out every 30 minutes. Cook immediately after thawing.

At outdoor gatherings:

- **Designate separate ice chests** for cold food and drinks, labeling them to minimize frequent opening. Stow out of the sun and insulated with a blanket, and replenish ice to keep coolers at 40 degrees F or below.
- When grilling, have **one plate for raw meat and another for when it is cooked**.
- Use a **food thermometer** to make sure meat is cooked to these temperatures:
 - o Poultry (whole or ground) – 165 degrees F
 - o Ground beef, lamb, veal, pork; sausages – 160 degrees F
 - o Beef steaks, lamb, pork chops, and seafood – 145 degrees F, PLUS resting at that heat for at least three minutes before serving to ward off more bacteria.
- Keep your **hands clean** if handling food at all. Use an alcohol-based sanitizer with 60% alcohol.

Now that you learned some quick tips, test your **Summer Food Safety IQ** with this short [quiz](#) from FoodSafety.gov, and follow the links in the answer section to learn more!