



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **Celebrate the Fourth of July Safely with Food Hygiene Tips for Cookouts & Picnics**

*With Elevated Community Levels in 67 Counties, IDPH is Reminding Those at Risk of Severe Outcomes to Mask up in Crowded Indoor Places*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Ahead of the Fourth of July Holiday weekend, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding those who are grilling out or packing a picnic to protect their family and friends by following proven safety tips to reduce the chance of spoiling the holiday by contracting a foodborne illness.

In addition, with elevated COVID-19 community levels in more than half the counties in Illinois, holiday hosts should take additional precautions to protect vulnerable guests. Hosts should hold as many activities outside as weather permits. For gatherings indoors, they should try to increase air flow by opening windows for fresh air or using a portable air cleaner. Anyone who is immunocompromised should wear a well-fitting mask around large crowds.

IDPH has previously reported that the CDC registered a ten percent uptick in COVID-19 cases following the Memorial Day Weekend. In light of that post-holiday bump, IDPH is urging Illinoisans to exercise caution and common sense when it comes to gatherings over Fourth of July weekend.

“As we celebrate the Fourth of July, we should all keep in mind that 67 counties in Illinois are rated at Medium or High Community Level for COVID-19,” said IDPH Acting Director Amaal Tokars. “If you are hosting a holiday gathering, make sure you are thinking of the safety of friends and family who are vulnerable to severe outcomes. You should hold events outdoors if possible, and in well-ventilated spaces if indoors. When it comes to cookouts and picnics, the most important safety rule is to keep cold foods cold and hot foods should be cooked to the proper temperature to avoid foodborne illnesses.”

In addition to tips on food safety, IDPH is also offering advice on water safety, preventing sun burn and heat stroke, preventing tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses, and fireworks safety.

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## **Food Safety:**

It can be difficult to keep food cold during warm weather, especially while picnicking or traveling. Keep meat, poultry, and seafood refrigerated until ready to grill. When transporting, keep foods 40°F or below in an insulated cooler. One tip to help keep your cooler below 40°F is to pack beverages in one cooler and food in another. The cooler with the beverages will likely be opened more frequently, causing the temperature inside the cooler to fluctuate. You can also keep coolers in the shade and out of the direct sun.

To guard against cross-contamination, food should be kept separate. Raw meat, poultry, and seafood should be stored and prepared separately from fruits, vegetables, cheeses, salads, and even cooked foods.

Before grilling, thaw food safely in the refrigerator, cold water, or microwave. Always marinate food in the refrigerator, no matter what kind of marinade you're using. Never thaw or marinate meat, poultry, or seafood on the counter. Harmful germs can multiply quickly at room temperature.

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Wash work surfaces, utensils, and grills before and after cooking.

Before grilling, use a moist cloth or paper towel to clean the grill surface. If you use a wire bristle brush, inspect the grill's surface before cooking. Wire bristles from the grill cleaning brush may dislodge and stick into food on the grill.

When grilling, make sure food is cooked to a safe temperature by using a food thermometer. Follow these temperature guidelines to ensure grilled food is safe for consumption:

- 145°F – whole cuts of beef, pork, lamb, and veal (then allow meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating)
- 145°F – fish
- 160°F – hamburgers and other ground beef
- 165°F – all poultry and pre-cooked meats, like hot dogs

After grilling, keep food at 140°F or warmer until served.

Throw out marinades and sauces that have touched raw meat juices, which can spread germs to cooked foods. Use clean utensils and a clean plate when taking cooked food off the grill.

After the meal, divide leftovers into small portions and place in covered, shallow containers. Make sure all leftovers are kept in the freezer, fridge, or on ice within two hours after cooking, or one hour if it is above 90°F outside.

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Know the symptoms of most types of food poisoning, which include severe cramps, fever, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea. Symptoms can begin from 30 minutes to three or more days after eating contaminated food. If symptoms are severe or last longer than two days, contact a doctor or health care provider.

More food safety tips and information about foodborne illnesses and symptoms can be found on the [CDC Food Safety website](#).

### **Water and Swimming Safety:**

Whether at the beach, on the lake, or in a swimming pool, keep the following safety precautions at top of mind:

- Supervise young children around water
- Always use life jackets and secure personal flotation devices
- Avoid alcohol while supervising children and before or during swimming, boating, or waterskiing
- Shower before entering a swimming pool and do not swim when ill with diarrhea
- Be aware of the local weather conditions and forecast, and watch for thunderstorms with lightening
- Pay attention to lifeguards and posted instructions

### **Sun and Heat:**

When the temperature is elevated, guard against sunburn and heat illness:

- Never leave anyone, including pets, alone in a closed, parked vehicle
- Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes before going outside
- Increase fluid intake - drink more liquid than thirst indicates; avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loosing-fitting clothing
- Be aware of heat exhaustion symptoms: heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, clammy skin, pale or flushed complexion, and fast and shallow breathing
  - If present, be sure to move the person to a cooler place; remove or loosen tight clothing; apply cool, wet cloths; and give cool water to slowly drink
- Be aware of heat stroke symptoms - hot, dry skin, hallucinations, chills, throbbing headache, high body temperature, confusion/dizziness and slurred speech

- If present, be sure to call 911; quickly cool the person in a cool bath or wrap wet sheets around them; if the victim refuses water, is vomiting or shows a decreased level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink

### **Ticks and Mosquitoes:**

Whether camping, hiking, or in the backyard, guard against insect-borne illnesses. Mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus and ticks can transmit Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Ehrlichiosis, and other serious infections.

- WEAR INSECT REPELLENT. Apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions
- Avoid being outside during prime mosquito-biting hours, dusk to dawn
- Avoid tick-infested areas, such as the woods and high grasses
- Check people and pets for ticks every 2 to 3 hours
- Remove ticks attached to the body promptly to help prevent diseases. Use tweezers to remove the tick and call a health care provider if a rash, fever or body aches develop during the 1 to 3 weeks following a bite.
- Check with a veterinarian about preventing tickborne diseases in pets as they can carry ticks into the home

### **Fireworks Safety:**

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal encourages everyone to [leave fireworks to the professionals](#). Every year across the state fireworks cause accidental fires, burn injuries, loss of limbs, and even in some cases deaths.

For more summer safety tips, checkout: [Summer? No Sweat. A Summer Survival Guide.](#)

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