

A publication of the  
Pinellas County Health Department

## Enjoy good health this summer with these Summer Food Safety Tips

Every year, we hear the same advice: Handle food carefully in the summer because foodborne illness - also known as "food poisoning" - is more common in warm weather.

**It's true. Foodborne illnesses increase during the summer** for two main reasons. First, there are the "natural causes." Most foodborne bacteria grow fastest at hot temperatures (from 90 to 110 °F). Bacteria also need moisture to flourish, and our Florida summers are both hot and humid.



Second, there are the "people causes" for the increase in summer foodborne illnesses. Outdoor activities increase during summer months as more people are cooking outside at picnics, barbecues, and on camping trips.

Outdoors, the safety controls that a kitchen provides — thermostat-controlled cooking, refrigeration, and washing facilities — are not usually available.

While we know that foodborne illness increases in warm weather, we also know that consumers can *Fight BAC!*<sup>TM</sup> by following these four simple steps to safer food in the summertime:

### 1. Clean:

**Unwashed hands and surfaces are a prime cause of foodborne illness.**

Wash your hands thoroughly with hot, soapy water before handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and handling pets.

### 2. Separate:

**Cross-contamination during preparing, grilling, and serving food is a prime cause of foodborne illness.**

- When packing the cooler for an outing, wrap raw meat securely; keep raw meat juices from coming in contact with ready-to-eat food.

- Wash plates, utensils, and cutting boards that held the raw meat or poultry before using them again for cooked food.



### 3. Cook:

**Food is properly cooked when it is heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria.**

- Take your food thermometer along. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often brown very fast on the *outside*, so be sure that meat is cooked thoroughly on the *inside*. Check it with a food thermometer.

- Cook meat and poultry completely at the

picnic site. Partially cooking food ahead of time allows bacteria to survive and multiply to the point that cooking later on cannot destroy them.

### 4. Chill:

**Keeping food at an unsafe temperature is a prime cause of foodborne illness. Keep cold food cold!**

- Cold refrigerated perishable food like lunch meat, cooked meat, chicken, and potato or pasta salad should be kept in an insulated cooler packed with ice cubes, ice packs, or containers of frozen water.

- Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable food in another cooler because the beverage cooler will be opened frequently.

### Leftovers?

Food left out of refrigeration for more than two hours may not be safe to eat. When the temperature is 90 °F or above, food should not be left out for more than one hour. And, **when in doubt, throw it out!**

For more food safety information, visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org). or call the toll-free USDA Hotline at (800) 535-4555; (TTY) (800) 256-7072.

It is staffed weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

An extensive selection of food safety recordings can be heard 24 hours a day using a touch-tone phone.



### Our Vision

*Healthier  
People in a  
Healthier  
Environment*

# Pinellas County Health Department

## Know How to Prevent Heat-Related Illness

July means more activities in the heat and humidity. Whether you love putting on shorts and being in the warm outdoors, or find it hot and miserable, be careful not to let heat-related illness spoil the day.

Normally, your body has ways of keeping itself cool, by letting heat escape through the skin, and by evaporating sweat (perspiration).

***If your body doesn't cool properly or doesn't cool enough, then you may suffer a heat-related illness.***

Everyone is at risk when the temperature rises above 90 degrees - but the elderly, individuals with underlying medical conditions and the very young are most susceptible.

***Heat-related illnesses can become serious or even deadly if unattended.***

### Preventing heat-related illness:

**\*Dress for the heat.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing that will reflect some of the heat. It's also a good idea to wear a hat or to use an umbrella.

**\*Drink water.** Carry water, juice or sports drink with you and drink continuously even if you don't feel thirsty. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which dehydrate the body.

**\*Eat small meals and eat more often.** Eat some fruit, especially bananas, if you're outside for work or play.

**\*Slow down.** If you must do strenuous activity, try to do it during the coolest part of the day, which is usually in the morning, between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.

**\*Stay indoors** when possible.

**\*Take regular breaks** when engaged in physical activity on warm days.

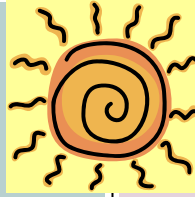
If you recognize that you, or someone else, is showing the signals of a heat-related illness, stop any activity and find a cool place for the person to rest and drink healthy fluids.

### Recognizing and treating heat-related illness:

Heat-related illness usually comes in stages. The signal of the first stage is **Heat Cramps** in muscles. These cramps – usually in the legs, arms or stomach muscles – can be very painful.

The signals of the next, more serious stage of a heat-related illness – **Heat Exhaustion** – include:

- \*Cool, moist, pale skin
- \*Headache
- \*Dizziness, weakness or exhaustion
- \*Nausea or vomiting
- \*The skin may feel hot and may or may not be red or mottled in color due to exertion



### Treating a person with heat cramps or heat exhaustion:

Get the person to a cooler place and have him or her rest in a comfortable position. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let him or her drink too quickly. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, as they can make conditions worse. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as towels or wet sheets.

**Heat Stroke**, the most serious of all heat-related illnesses, occurs when the body cannot control its temperature. The body temperature can rise so high that *brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly*. Signals of heat stroke include:

- \*Vomiting
- \*Headache, dizziness
- \*Decreased alertness level or complete loss of consciousness
- \*High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105°F)
- \*Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry
- \*Rapid pulse
- \*Rapid, shallow breathing

**Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency!  
Call 9-1-1 immediately.**

### Treating a person with heat stroke:

#### Heat stroke is an emergency!

Help is needed fast. **Call 9-1-1.**

Move the person to a cooler spot.

If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. Do not use rubbing alcohol because it closes the skin's pores and prevents

heat loss. Watch for signals of breathing problems and make sure the airway is clear. Keep the person lying down until help arrives.

Remember, anyone can suffer a heat-related illness, but by taking a few simple precautions, it can be prevented. With a little caution and common sense, you can avoid heat illnesses and enjoy the summer.

For more information about avoiding heat-related illness and staying safe this summer, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)



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