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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tips for Safe and Healthy Summertime Cooking

Practicing proper food handling techniques will protect you, your family and friends from food-borne illness and food contamination. Here are some tips to keep in mind when preparing, storing and cooking food as you celebrate the Fourth of July and other summer activities.

Wash Hands, Utensils, and Food Preparation Surfaces

- Food safety begins with hand-washing even in outdoor settings. And it can be as simple as using a water jug, some soap and paper towels.
- You can use moist disposable towelettes for cleaning your hands.
- Keep all utensils and platters clean when preparing food.

Preparing Fruits and Vegetables

- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten, under running tap water before packing them. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat," "washed" or "triple washed" need not be washed.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.

Safe Grilling Tips

- Marinate foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter or outdoors. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry or seafood. Don't re-use marinade.
- Don't use the same platter and utensils that previously held raw meat or seafood to serve cooked meats and seafood.
- If you partially cook food in the microwave, oven or stove to reduce grilling time, do so immediately before the food goes on the hot grill.
- When it's time to cook the food, cook it thoroughly. Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached an adequate internal temperature before serving.
 - Beef, veal and lamb--145°F for medium rare, 160°F for medium, and 170°F for well done.
 - Ground pork and ground beef--160°F.
 - Ground poultry--165°F. Poultry breasts--170°F.
 - Whole poultry (take measurement in the thigh)--180°F.
 - Fin fish--145°F or until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork.
 - Shrimp, lobster and crab --the meat should be pearly and opaque.
 - Clams, oysters, and mussels--until the shells are open.

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- Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals where it can overcook.

Serving Food Safely

- Keep cold foods *cold* and hot foods *hot*. Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Cold food should be held at or below 40°F.
- Do not use a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood for anything else unless the plate has first been washed in hot, soapy water.
- Hot food should be kept hot, at or above 140 °F. Wrap well and place in an insulated container.
- Foods like chicken salad and desserts in individual serving dishes can also be placed directly on ice, or in a shallow container set in a deep pan filled with ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.
- Don't let perishable food sit out longer than two hours.
- Food should not sit out for more than one hour in temperatures above 90°F

A Note about Transporting Food

- Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another.
- Meat, poultry and seafood may be packed while still frozen so that they stay colder longer. Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry and seafood securely wrapped so their juice doesn't contaminate cooked foods or foods eaten raw, such as fruits and vegetables.
- After washing fruits and vegetables dry them with a clean cloth towel or paper towel before packing them.
- Keep the cooler in the air-conditioned passenger compartment of your car, rather than in a hot trunk.
- Limit the times the cooler is opened.

For more information, contact the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at 1-888-SAFE-FOOD.

The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.
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