



PICNIC FOOD SAFETY POLICY and PROCEDURE

One small error can sicken a whole family and volunteer team. One in six Americans gets sick every year from foodborne pathogens. Let's help families and volunteers stay healthy by following these seven safe picnic guidelines.

Nearly half of all foodborne illnesses could be eliminated if people would **wash their hands** more often when preparing food. Wash your hands before cooking, after handling raw meat and before eating. Bring hand sanitizer if there is no running water at your picnic site, and rub it all over your hands, including between fingers and around nails.

START WITH A CLEAN SLATE

Be careful. Don't let juices from raw meat or poultry drip into your cooler. They will create a breeding ground for bacteria growth. Before you pack for your picnic, sanitize your cooler and wash reusable bags you'll use to transport food. Pack your food in clean, tightly sealed containers.

If you won't have access to running water at your picnic site, wash fruits and veggies at home first. Wash produce even if you plan on peeling it; bacteria can transfer from the knife or peeler to the edible portion.

Clean and sanitize the reusable tablecloth. Use prepared utensils that have been wrapped for safety purposes. Ensure paper plates come from a closed ziplock bag and return them to the bag to keep them clean.

Wear plastic gloves when handling food.

DON'T CROSS CONTAMINATE

If you won't be able to wash plates, tongs and serving utensils at the picnic site, bring two sets: one for handling raw meats and one for serving cooked meat. Accidentally serving cooked hamburgers on the same plate you used for the raw patties can lead to foodborne illness. Make sure you keep ready-to-eat food such as buns, fruits, vegetables and side dishes away from contaminated serving utensils, too. Always use gloves to handle ready-to-eat foods.



Also, don't reuse marinade used on raw meat or poultry unless boiled. When packing your cooler add cold foods straight from the fridge. Separate cooked foods from raw foods and animal-based foods from fruits and vegetables.

KEEP FOOD COOL

Even an insulated cooler can't keep food cool enough on its own. Pack your cooler about three quarters of the way full of food, reserving one quarter of the space for ice packs. If possible, chill or freeze foods before packing them in your cooler. Pack cold and hot food separately.

Always pack a thermometer and keep an eye on it throughout the day, ensuring it doesn't go above 40°F. Consider packing beverages in a separate cooler. You can keep the cooler with the perishable food closed while the beverage cooler is frequently opened and shut.

DON'T REPURPOSE ICE

If you're bringing ice to use in beverages, pack it in a separate sealed bag. Don't use loose ice used to keep food cold in beverages. This ice could have picked up odorless, invisible bacteria from leaking food.

DON'T LET FOOD SIT OUT

Keep perishable picnic food out of the danger zone — a temperature range between 40°F and 140°F. When food is in the danger zone, bacteria can double in number every 20 minutes. Unfortunately, you cannot see, smell or taste if a food has harmful bacteria or toxins growing in it. Pack food in a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice or ice packs to keep temperature below 40°F. Transport the cooler in the backseat of your air-conditioned car instead of in your hot trunk. Remove from the cooler only the amount of raw meat that will fit on the grill. Defrost meat, poultry and seafood in the refrigerator before taking them to the grill.

Don't let food sit out more than two hours. If the temperature outside is 90°F or above, food may only sit out for an hour. Bring a timer or set an alarm on your cell phone to remind you when it's time to put food away. Remember — it's not just meat that can make you sick. All perishable food should be monitored closely, especially egg, potato and tuna salads made with mayonnaise, and anything dairy-based.