

Summertime Food Safety Tips

Bacteria or other micro-organisms can contaminate food and cause unpleasant and potentially serious illnesses. The risk of food-borne disease is particularly high in summer because bacteria multiply faster in warm environments. Following simple precautions in the handling, storage, and preparation of food will significantly reduce the chance of becoming unwell from food-borne illnesses during summer.

Shopping

- Plan your shopping to keep your perishable food items cool until you get home.
- Check the use-by dates on perishable food.
- Buy chilled and frozen food last. Pack them together in an insulated bag or cool box.
- Refrigerate promptly as soon as you reach home.
- Do not leave your food shopping in a hot car.

Storing

- Store perishable foods in a properly working fridge or freezer.
- Clean the fridge regularly and defrost if necessary.
- Avoid overloading the fridge as it reduces the cooling efficiency.
- Make sure that the fridge temperature is set to 5°C or below.
- Ensure frozen food is hard frozen.
- Do not re-freeze food that has thawed.
- Keep raw and cooked food separated.
- Store ready-to-eat food above raw food.
- Limit the time food spends out of the fridge or freezer to the shortest time possible.

Eating Outdoors

- Carefully plan events where people are eating outdoors to reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses.
- In deciding what to eat, ensure menu items are easy to handle outdoors.
- Prepare raw meat at home and not at the barbeque site, camp-ground or sporting event.

- Take care to cook chicken and processed meat thoroughly so that the juices run clear and no pink is left visible. This will kill disease-causing bacteria. 'Underdone' meat can still transmit illness.
- Carry food in a cool box – pack plenty of ice blocks or frozen bricks.
- In the car, keep the cool box in the coolest part of the vehicle – if possible, in the air-conditioned passenger compartment rather than the boot.
- Keep all perishable food cold until serving.
- Eat cooked food while it is still hot.
- Only prepare enough food for what you need so as to avoid having left-overs.
- Refrigerate any leftovers as soon as possible.
- Carry plenty of water with you.
- Dispose of rubbish and waste thoughtfully.

Need more information?

For further public health information call the Health Protection Service on 02 5124 9700, email hps@act.gov.au or visit the ACT Health website www.health.act.gov.au.

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