

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Keep Your Food Safe This Summer

Summer is here and that means outdoor cookouts, camping, and summer fun. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) would like to take this time to remind everyone to keep their food safe to eat and reduce the risk of food poisoning. While the United States has one of the safest food supplies in the world, preventing foodborne illness remains a major public health challenge. About 1 in 4 of all disease investigations done by SWNPHD are related to gastrointestinal illnesses, including food poisoning.

Follow these recommendations to keep your food safe this summer.

Clean: When picnicking or cooking outdoors, take plenty of clean utensils. Pack clean dry cloths and wet soapy cloths or wipes for cleaning surfaces and hands. Either use a tablecloth or wash picnic tables before eating. Keep pets away from food and surfaces used for food.

Wash hands often before, during, and after preparing food and before eating. Wash your utensils, cutting boards, and surfaces with hot, soapy water.

Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under clean running water before packing them in a cooler.

Separate: Don't cross-contaminate (that is spreading around bacteria from raw food). Use separate plates and cutting boards for raw meat and seafood. Keep raw meat, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods.

Most importantly, don't use the same platter and utensils that held raw meat to serve the cooked food.

Cook: Use a food thermometer to make sure food is cooked to a safe temperature. Check ask.usda.gov for cooking temperature guidelines.

Chill: When eating outside, keep foods with mayo, eggs, or milk products on ice. Keep your cooler at 40°F or below and limit the number of times it is opened as much as you can.

Refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours. (If outdoor temperature is above 90°F, refrigerate within 1 hour.) Throw out anything remaining if it was out for more than 2 hours.

Contact the Public Health Nurses at 308-345-4223 for more information on food safety and foodborne illnesses. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram or visit swhealth.ne.gov.

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