



# FOOD SAFETY TIPS

for

## Carefree Summertime Dining

By Lynda Savage, RD, LD

**T**he sunny days of summer bring us hot temperatures, BBQ's and picnics. It's also when we're most at risk of food poisoning. Before you plan your next BBQ or pack your next picnic basket, remember these simple tips to ensure a healthy event!

**Wash hands often** Bacteria is easily transferred from the body to food surfaces. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before, during, and after food preparation. Pack moist towelettes or hand sanitizer in your cooler for use when soap and water are not available.

**Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate** This will prevent cross contamination, a leading cause of food borne illness. Be sure to use separate plates for raw and cooked foods. Use different knives, grilling tongs or forks for raw and cooked meats. Do not reuse marinade on cooked items. Use different spoons and forks to taste, stir and serve foods.

**Cook food to proper temperatures** This is the only way to ensure that harmful bacteria have been destroyed. Use a meat thermometer to ensure your meats have cooked to the right temperature.

- Hamburgers: 160 degrees.
- Chicken: 170 degrees.
- Hot dogs: 160 degrees

Never partially grill meat or poultry to finish cooking later.

**Make sure that cold foods are kept cold** To prevent the growth of harmful bacteria, be sure to pack foods in a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice or ice packs to keep the temperature below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. A refrigerator thermometer in the cooler will help make sure it is kept cold enough. Transport the cooler in the back seat of an air conditioned car instead of a hot trunk. Remove only the amount

of food that will be cooked or consumed immediately. Do not leave food outside in hot weather for more than one hour and throw away any foods that have been unrefrigerated for more than an hour. Defrost meat, fish, or poultry in a refrigerator or microwave. Do not leave on countertops or outside at the party.

**Practice other food safety behaviors** Make it a habit to clean out coolers with soap and water between each use. Scrub the grill thoroughly with hot soapy water before cooking. Pay careful attention to expiration dates on packaging; especially meats, fish, poultry, and dairy products. *If in doubt throw it out!*

- **Sell by** date tells the store how long to display for sale. It can be consumed for a few more days.
- **Use by or Best Used by** date is the last date recommended for use of the product at peak quality.
- **Expiration date** means TOSS IT after this date.

### MORE FOOD SAFETY TIPS:

- Refrigerate leftovers as soon as possible after cooking and use within 3 to 4 days.
- An unopened package of deli meat can be kept in the refrigerator for two weeks, but once opened, they should be used within 3 to 5 days. Meats sliced in the deli and wrapped are considered "open" and should be discarded after the 3 to 5 days.
- Fresh fish or shellfish should be used in 1 to 2 days.
- Bread and fruit do not need to be refrigerated, but if they are, store away from raw meat, fish or poultry to avoid cross-contamination.
- When defrosting meats in the refrigerator, place on a plate or tray so juices are contained. Store them below food items that will be consumed in their raw state.
- Symptoms of food borne illness are usually flu-like with mild to severe intestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea with or without fever. The onset of symptoms begin 2 to 48 hours after eating contaminated food and can last 1 to 7 days.

 **The Elliot.**  
*Live Better!*