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NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT

IT'S YOUR HEALTH SUMMER 2010

Summer Picnics & Food Safety

Picnicking is a special part of many summertime activities. If picnic foods are not handled safely, they can cause foodborne illness. To prevent illness, take safety on your picnic.

Three reasons why picnic foods can be hazardous:

Food receives a lot of handling. Picnic foods — such as potato or macaroni salads, sandwich fillings, hamburger patties and cut watermelon — often receive a lot of handling during preparation. Handling increases the risk of contamination with harmful bacteria.

Food is not cooled rapidly after cooking. Some common picnic foods require precooking and are prepared in large quantities. Cooked foods must be rapidly cooled by putting in shallow pans and refrigerating immediately after cooking so harmful bacteria does not grow.

Warm temperatures promote bacterial growth. Equipment to keep hot food hot and cold food cold is usually not used and food sits out for long periods of time. Warm temperatures support the growth of harmful bacteria. The longer food is at warm temperatures, the more likely foodborne illness will result.

Keeping Picnic Food Safe



Preparing Food Safely. Wash hands before handling food and use clean utensils and containers. Dirty hands, utensils, containers and any work surfaces can contaminate food with harmful bacteria and viruses.

Do not prepare foods more than one day before your picnic unless it is to be frozen.

Cooking foods in advance allows for more opportunities for bacteria to grow. Cooked foods need to be rapidly cooled in shallow pans. Spread the food out in as many pans as is needed so that food is no more than two inches deep. Over 67% of reported cases of foodborne illness are due to improper cooling. Frozen foods can be used if thawed in the refrigerator.

Mayonnaise-based foods need to be kept cold. Mayonnaise alone is too acidic for bacteria to grow in it. However, when mayonnaise is mixed with other foods, (particularly those that have been handled a lot and/or are protein foods), bacteria can grow if this mixture is kept too warm.

Cut melons need to be kept cold. Many people do not realize that melons, such as watermelons and cantaloupe, can cause foodborne illness. Bacteria, such as Salmonella and Shigella (common causes of foodborne illness), are often present on the rind. Therefore, wash melons thoroughly before cutting then promptly refrigerate cut pieces. Melons, unlike most other fruits, are not acidic and therefore can support the growth of harmful bacteria.





Packing For Safety

Keep cold food cold. Keep cold food at 40°F or colder to prevent bacterial growth. To do so, pack cold foods in a sturdy, insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Freeze your own blocks of ice in milk cartons or plastic containers for use in the cooler. Put cold foods in water-proof containers or wrap in plastic wrap or aluminum foil and completely immerse in the ice inside the cooler. If using frozen gel packs or containers of homemade ice, place them between packages of food. Never just set containers of food on top of ice.

The trunk of your car can reach temperatures of 150°F so it is best to transport coolers in the passenger area of the car. When you arrive at the picnic site, put a blanket over the cooler and place it in the shade to maintain cold temperatures. Keep the cooler closed until ready to use the contents.

Keep hot food hot. Keep hot foods at 140°F or hotter to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. Take-out foods or foods cooked just before being transported to the picnic can be carried hot. Wrap hot food in towels, then newspaper, and place inside a box or heavy paper bag. Keep these foods warm on a lit grill or use within one hour. If you cannot keep cold food cold and hot food hot, take foods that do not need refrigeration. Some examples include: peanut butter sandwiches, dried fruit, nuts, unpeeled fresh fruit (i.e., apples, oranges, bananas), jelly sandwiches, unopened cans of food, meat, or fish, or fruit cookies, cakes and crackers.

Wash your hands. Pack moist towelettes if you think your picnic site might not have hand washing facilities available. Hands carry harmful bacteria and viruses that contaminate food and cause illness.

Pack plenty of utensils and dishware. Never use the utensils and dishware that have touched raw foods, such as meat, fish and poultry, to store fresh or cooked foods unless they have been washed between use. Juices from some raw foods contain harmful bacteria that can contaminate other foods and cause foodborne illness. Because proper washing might be difficult at a picnic, pack extra plates and utensils to prevent cross-contamination. Better yet, consider using disposable plates.

Cooking Food at the Picnic

Wash hands before handling food and use clean utensils and containers. Dirty hands, utensils, containers and any work surfaces can contaminate food with harmful bacteria and viruses.

Thoroughly cook food all at one time. Never partially cook food, let it sit, then finish cooking it later. This provides conditions that allow harmful bacteria to grow and possibly form toxins. (Toxins are poisons formed by some bacteria.) Some toxins are not destroyed by cooking, so reheating the food later will not make it safe.

Cooking at the picnic. Whether cooking indoors or outside on a grill, meat and poultry must be cooked thoroughly to ensure that harmful bacteria are destroyed. Grill raw poultry until the juices run clear and there is no pink close to the bone. Hamburgers should not be pink in the center.



Serving

Keep cold foods cold during serving the meal. Do not let cold foods sit out for more than one hour. Any leftovers should be put back in the cooler right after they are served. The longer foods are held at unsafe temperatures the more likely that bacteria can grow and cause foodborne illness.

Keep hot foods hot during the serving of the meal. Cooked foods are just as perishable as raw foods, so once grilled foods are cooked do not let them sit out for more than one hour. Plan preparation so food is eaten shortly after it is cooked.

Prevent contamination. Keep foods covered to prevent contamination by insects. Many insects can carry harmful bacteria and viruses on their bodies.



Handling leftovers

Because most picnic leftovers have been sitting out for more than one hour and have had many people handling them, throw them out. The more time that food has been sitting at unsafe temperature, the more likely harmful bacteria has grown.

Cold foods kept in a cooler that still has ice may be safe. If the ice is melted, throw out the food. Cold water cannot keep foods cold enough to be safe.

This information is provided by Angela M. Fraser, Ph.D., Food Safety Specialist, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences.



Check out these websites mentioned in this edition of "It's Your Health".

Summer Safety: <http://www.webmd.com/fda/sun-safety-save-your-skin>

Poison Ivy and Other Skin Irritants: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/poison-ivy/SN00022>

Food Safety: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>

Food Safety: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>

Heat Illness: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/heatillness.html>

Exercise Safety: http://sportsmedicine.about.com/od/enviromentalissues/a/Exercise_Heat.htm

The "R" Word Campaign: <http://therword.org/>

MayoClinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/search/search>

California Department of Developmental Services: <http://www.dds.cahwnet.gov/>

Heat-Related Illnesses

Summer is here! Days are getting warmer and the hot weather can cause serious health problems. The following people or conditions make are more susceptible to heat-related illnesses:

- Older or elderly population.
- Overweight.
- Illnesses, like heart disease or diabetes.
- Taking certain types of medications.
- Low salt diets.
- People unaccustomed to hot weather.



At what temperature do people become at risk for heat related illnesses?



80 to 90 degrees

Fatigue is possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.

90 to 105 degrees

Heat stroke, heat cramps and heat exhaustion are possible with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.

105 to 130 degrees

Heat stroke, heat cramps and heat exhaustion are likely, particularly with prolonged exposure and/or physical activity.

130 degrees

Heat stroke/sunstroke is highly likely with and higher continued exposure.

Preventing Heat Sickness

When it is very hot outside, you should follow these guidelines:

- **Get Plenty to Drink.** Drink more water and juice. Avoid drinks with caffeine.
- **Wear Light Clothing.** Choose lightweight, light colored, loose fitting clothing. Wear a hat.
- **Use Sunscreen.** Use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
- **Stay Cool Indoors.** Stay in an air conditioned area. Room temperatures should be between 68 and 85 degrees.
- **Schedule Outdoor Activities Carefully.** Be less active in the middle of the day and late afternoon. Never leave anyone in a parked car.

Most Common Heat Related Illnesses

Illness	Symptoms	Treatment*	When to Call a Health Professional
Sun Burn	Redness and pain in the skin. In severe cases there is also swelling, blisters, fever and headaches.	Drink lots of water. Take acetaminophen or aspirin for the pain. Don't give aspirin to children. Aloe Vera gel and certain moisturizers will help reduce the pain and itch associated with sunburn.	If severe blistering occurs with fever or a very ill feeling. If a fever is 102 degrees or higher. If signs of heat stroke develop. If dizziness or vision problems persist after you have cooled off.
Heat Cramps	Heavy sweating and painful spasms usually in the leg or abdomen muscles.	Get the person to a cooler place and have them rest in a comfortable position. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let them drink too quickly. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths.	If symptoms persist for over 2 hours.
Heat Exhaustion	Weakness and heavy sweating. The skin is cold, pale and clammy. The pulse becomes weak and shallow. Fatigue, confusion, weakness, dizziness and nausea. Fainting and vomiting may occur.	Get the person to a cooler place and have them rest in a comfortable position. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let them drink too quickly. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths or sponge the body with cool water in a bath.	Call 911 or go to the emergency room if: the skin is dry, even under the armpits, and bright red or flushed, the body temperature reaches 102 degrees, or the person is delirious, disoriented, or unconscious.
Heat Stroke, which is also known as Sunstroke	High blood temperature (102 degrees or higher) along with hot dry skin and a rapid and strong pulse. Unconsciousness is possible. The victims temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, has stopped working.	This is a life-threatening situation! Help is needed fast. Call 911 and then move the person to a cooler place and quickly cool the body. This can be done by wrapping a wet sheet around the body and fanning it. If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victims wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. Do not use rubbing alcohol because it closes the skin's pores and prevents heat loss. Keep the person lying down and make sure they are breathing.	Call 911 immediately.

*Medical advice should be obtained directly from a licensed physician.

Planning An Outing This Summer?



This checklist may help you plan a safer trip:

- ✓ Those with communication difficulties should carry identification and emergency phone numbers in case they become lost.
- ✓ Anyone taking medication should have some with them. Check with your pharmacist to see if the medication requires special handling.
- ✓ Make sure that those who are eating on the outing are consuming foods that are consistent with their individual dietary requirements.
- ✓ Know where emergency stations are located or if you will have phone service.
- ✓ Be sure that there is adequate assistance for all individuals.
- ✓ Make sure you know if anyone under your care is allergic to particular medications, food, fluids, or other substances in the environment.



The “R” Word

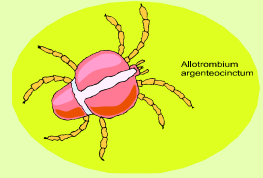
Some people have mental retardation (intellectual disabilities). While mental retardation is not a bad word, when used to describe someone or something you think is bad or stupid it becomes another thoughtless hurtful word.

People with intellectual disabilities are not bad. Their condition is not bad.

The prejudice and discrimination to people with intellectual disabilities is BAD and WRONG! Please stop using the word ‘retard’. It hurts individuals and families of those with disabilities.

To learn more about the “R” Word Campaign please visit www.theRword.org.

Tick Bites: First Aid



Some ticks transmit bacteria that cause illnesses such as Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Your risk of contracting one of these diseases depends on what part of the United States you live in, how much time you spend in wooded areas and how well you protect yourself.

If you've received a tick bite:

- Remove the tick promptly and carefully. Use tweezers to grasp the tick near its head or mouth and pull gently to remove the whole tick without crushing it.
- If possible, seal the tick in a jar. Your doctor may want to see the tick if you develop signs or symptoms of illness after a tick bite.
- Use soap and water to wash your hands and the area around the tick bite after handling the tick.
- Call your doctor if you aren't able to completely remove the tick.

See your doctor if you develop:

- A rash
- A fever
- A stiff neck
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain and inflammation
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Flu-like symptoms
- If possible, bring the tick with you to your doctor's appointment.

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you develop:

- A severe headache
- Difficulty breathing
- Paralysis
- Chest pain or heart palpitations

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IDEAS FOR OUR NEWSLETTER?

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