

HOT WEATHER & FOOD SAFETY

We all love to barbecue, especially when the weather starts to get warm. However, it is important to handle food safely to avoid foodborne illnesses.

- Being outside in hot and humid weather, away from the refrigerator, and cooking outside can increase the risk of ingesting food borne illnesses (Food poisoning)
- Harmful bacteria can grow in 2 hrs at the temperature between 4°C to 60°C
- Food can be contaminated by bacteria and viruses at anytime before serving, by handling, storing or cooking at home
- The most vulnerable people for food borne illnesses are pregnant mothers, children under 5 years, adults over 60 years, and people with a weakened immune system
- The Government of Canada reports close to 4 million cases related to food borne illnesses each year
- These incidents can be avoided if food is handled safely

Some Helpful Tips

Shopping:

- Safe food handling starts from grocery shopping. At the store pick up dry, canned room temperature food first, and pick up cold foods before going to check out.
- keep raw meat, chicken, and seafood separate in the grocery cart
- check expiry/best before dates on food products
- If possible, keep an ice pack cooler to bring cold food home in

Chilling:

- The temperature of the refrigerator should be 4°C (40° F) or lower. The temperature of the freezer should be -18°C (0) or lower
- Refrigerate or freeze cold foods promptly after coming home from the grocery store

- Use separate containers for raw meat, poultry, sea food, vegetables, and fruits, that need refrigeration
- For outdoor storage, keep raw meat, poultry, and sea food in sealed containers or Ziploc bags and place them at the bottom of a cooler
- On hot summer days avoid keeping food at room temperature for more than 1hr
- Place perishable foods in a cooler with ice cubes/packs to keep the food cold on the go
- Make sure the direct sunlight does not get on the cooler and open the cooler only when it is necessary

Preparing:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after preparing food
- Wash all the cutting boards, knives, utensils, dinnerware with soap and clean water. Keep separate cutting board for fruits and vegetables
- Use water and bleach solution to sanitize cooking equipment, utensils and work surfaces

Cooking:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before starting to cook
- Cook raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood at a safe internal temperature
- To check the internal temperature, use a digital food thermometer
- To make sure the accurate internal temperature, take the meat/poultry off the grill and place it on a clean dish and insert the thermometer through the thickest part of the meat
- For hamburgers, insert the thermometer through the side of the patty, all the way to the middle
- Remember to clean the thermometer in warm and soapy water in between checking temperature on different food to avoid cross contamination

Serving:

- Serve hot food hot, and cold food cold
- On hot and humid days, do not keep food at room temperature for more than an hour
- Creamy, mayonnaise based salads need to be kept in the fridge or cooler until it gets served

Leftovers:

- Use shallow containers to cool off food. Do not keep leftover at room temperature more than an hour

For more resources check out the following links:

- **Online food shopping :** <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/food-safety/food-safety-at-home/>
- **Safe cooking temperature:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips/safe-internal-cooking-temperatures.html>