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Seven Steps to safe food in the summer

As we approach the Fourth of July holiday, the Kane County Health Department is reminding residents that during warm weather it is especially important to take extra precautions and practice safe food handling when preparing perishable foods such as meat, poultry, seafood and egg products. The warmer weather conditions may be ideal for outdoor picnics and barbecues, but they also provide a perfect environment for bacteria and other pathogens in food to multiply rapidly and cause foodborne illness. As part of its summer-long food safety campaign, the Health Department recommends following the suggestions below to fight foodborne bacteria and reduce the risk of foodborne illness this summer.

1. **Wash, Wash, Wash Your Hands.** Always wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Sing Row, Row, Row Your Boat twice to get a sense of how long you should wash.
2. **Marinating Mandate.** Always marinate food in the refrigerator. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food. Reserve a portion of the unused marinade to use as a sauce.
3. **Hot, Hot, Hot.** When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
4. **Temperature Gauge.** Use a food thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
5. **Where's the Beef? Chicken and Fish? Hamburgers** should be cooked to 160 °F, while large cuts of beef such as roasts and steaks may be cooked to 145 °F for medium rare or to 160 °F for medium. Poultry must reach a temperature of 165 °F. Fish should be opaque and flake easily.
6. **Stay Away from that Same Old Plate.** When taking foods off the grill, do not put cooked food items back on the same plate that held raw food, unless it has been washed with hot water and soap first. And in hot weather (above 90°F) foods should never sit out for more than one hour before going in the refrigerator.
7. **Icebox Etiquette.** A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to ensure a constant cold temperature. Keep the cooler out of the direct sun. Keep drinks in a separate cooler from foods. The beverage cooler will be opened frequently while the food cooler stays cold

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Food poisoning, also called foodborne illness, is a serious public health threat in the U.S. CDC estimates that approximately 1 in 6 Americans (48 million people) suffer from foodborne illness each year, resulting in roughly 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths.

More information about food safety is available at www.kanehealth.com/food_safety.htm; Please follow us on Facebook and Twitter @KaneCoHealth throughout the summer for regular posts regarding food safety. Information is also available at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854), TTY 1-800-256-7072; the Fight BAC!® Web site at www.fightbac.org; and the Gateway to Government Food Safety Information at www.foodsafety.gov.

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