



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
“Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities”

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To: Local News Media

**From: Amenzee Omofonmwan, Health Promotion & Preparedness Intern
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RE: Summertime Food Safety

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SUMMERTIME FOOD SAFETY

Summertime is here and it is a time of fellowship with family and friends. It is also a time to have picnics and other gatherings involving fresh air, hotdogs, and watermelon. Unfortunately, when proper food handling steps are not taken, such gatherings can be spoiled. In a 2002 news release, Susan Conley, Director of Food Safety Education for the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service, released several important tips on having safe and healthy picnic gatherings.

- 1. Keep Everything Clean:** Find out if there is a source of safe, drinking water at your destination. If there isn’t one available, bring water for preparation and cleaning; or pack clean, wet, disposable cloths or moist towelettes and paper towels for cleaning hands and surfaces. You must always wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling food. You shouldn’t use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meat and poultry.
- 2. Keeping Hot Food Hot and Cold Food Cold:** Holding food at an unsafe temperature is the primary cause of food borne illness. Food should not be left out of the cooler or off the grill for more than two hours. Only one hour is needed when outside temperature is above 90°F. Raw meat and poultry should be cooked at temperatures that will destroy the bacteria that cause food borne illnesses. They need to be held at temperatures that are either too hot or too cold for such bacteria to grow.

- **Keep Hot Food Hot:** If bringing hot take out food like barbeque and fried chicken, it should be eaten within two hours of purchase. You could also plan ahead and chill your food in the refrigerator before packing it into an insulated cooler. You should also remember to pack a food thermometer to check that your meat and poultry reach a safe internal temperature. When reheating food for an outing, the temperature should reach 165°F.
- **Keep Cold Food Cold:** Cold perishable foods like hamburger patties, hotdogs, luncheon meats, and chicken should be carried in an insulated cooler packed with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Perishable cooked foods such as meats, chicken, potatoes or potato salad must be kept cold as well. Raw meat and poultry should be wrapped securely to prevent juices from cross-contaminating ready-to-eat food. Plastic Ziploc bags or food storage containers work well for this. Food, primarily, should be kept in the cooler except for the times when serving. You should only cook the amount of food that will be eaten to avoid the challenge of keeping leftovers at a safe temperature. Discard any leftovers that haven't remained cold.

For additional information on maintaining summertime food safety, you can go online to the Central Michigan District Health Department website at www.cmdhd.org/safefood. The CMDHD website also provides useful information on many community presentations and food safety courses available for a variety of audiences. You can also visit the FSIS Website at www.fsis.usda.gov/ or the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.

This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department which serves the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties.

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