



MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Your public health team, connecting with our communities to achieve healthier outcomes

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Tips for handling food safely this summer

Ithaca, Stanton St. Johns- Backyard barbeques and family picnics are in full swing, so the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) would like to take this opportunity to reinforce the importance of proper food handling.

To help keep your family safe from foodborne illness, follow these steps when handling and preparing food:

Step one is to avoid the spread of bacteria. Wash hands and lower arms with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before preparing food, and after handling raw meats or poultry, using the bathroom, touching pets or changing diapers. Always wash raw fruits and vegetables in clean water, and clean cooking surfaces, utensils and counters often with soap.

Step two is to keep cold food cold. Perishable foods normally kept in the refrigerator must be kept in a cooler with freezer packs or ice to keep the temperature at or near 40° F. Also put leftovers back in the refrigerator or cooler as soon as you are done eating. The simple rule is: When in doubt, throw it out!

Step three is to keep raw meats and poultry separate from cooked foods to avoid cross-contamination. When you pack a cooler, wrap uncooked meats and poultry separately, and put them on the bottom to prevent raw juices from dripping onto other foods. A separate cooler for storing raw food is ideal. Make sure to wash all plates, utensils, and cutting boards that touched or held raw meat or poultry before using them again.

Step four is to make sure to kill harmful bacteria by thoroughly cooking food. Visual cues, like color, are not a guarantee that food is safe. Don't guess! Use a metal stemmed thermometer to check when meat and poultry are safe to eat. Foods are safe to eat when internal temperatures are:

- 155° F for 15 seconds for ground beef
- 145° F for 15 seconds for beef steak
- 165° F for 15 seconds for poultry
- 145° F for 15 seconds for pork chops/steak

For additional information on proper food handling, visit the United States Department of Agriculture website at www.usda.gov.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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