



Extension Connection

For Immediate Release:

July 16, 2018

The mission of K-State Research and Extension Family and Consumer Sciences is to link education with life experiences to help people improve their lives, their families and their communities. Family and Consumer Sciences professionals support essential life skills including Community Development, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Leadership & Volunteer Development, Relationship Development and Resource Management.

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Food Safe Summer

The rate of foodborne illness increases as the weather warms up, but that doesn't mean your family is doomed this summer! There are plenty of steps you can take to keep your family safe while enjoying the opportunities that summer brings for picnics, barbecues and camping trips. As with food safety anywhere – indoors or out – the number one thing we can do to protect ourselves from illness is handwashing. If warm water and soap are not available at your camp site or favorite picnic spot, be sure to pack hand sanitizer or sanitizing wipes for everyone!

Remember the basics: clean, separate, cook and chill. **Clean** fruits, vegetables and utensils before packing up and leaving home. Also consider bringing a clean blanket or tablecloth to place underneath plates and utensils while eating. **Separate** ready-to-eat and uncooked foods using Ziploc bags and plan to bring plenty of utensils so that you don't have to reuse anything designated for uncooked meats. **Cook** foods to a safe temperature verified with a food thermometer. **Chill** all foods within an hour. Continue reading for more specific tips to help protect your family from foodborne illness this summer.

- Pack beverages and perishable foods in separate coolers. Beverage coolers are likely to be opened more often, which creates more opportunities for the temperature inside the cooler to increase.
- Be sure to pack plenty of ice or ice packs to keep perishable foods cool for as long as you'll be away from a refrigerator. If you are unable to use an insulated cooler, do not take perishable foods. Instead, you can put together a meal with shelf-stable foods such as nuts and nut butters, dried or whole fruits, canned meats or fish, crackers and bread.
- Keep coolers away from extreme heat. Place in the shade at a picnic site and transport in the back seat of the car rather than the trunk.
- When the temperature is >90°F, perishable foods left out of a cooler or refrigerator for more than one hour should be thrown away.
- If grilling raw meats, be sure to keep separate from ready-to-eat foods. Consider double-bagging raw meat for transport to prevent any juice being leaked. Never re-use plates or utensils that touched raw meat to serve or eat cooked foods.
- Keep food in the coolers until you are ready to cook or eat them.
- For individual picnic lunches, make homemade frozen fruit cups to pack along with other foods. By lunchtime, other foods will still be cold and the fruit cup will be the perfect slushy consistency. You could also freeze a water bottle which can double as an ice pack and refreshing beverage!

Picnics, barbecues and camping trips are all wonderful opportunities for quality time in the great outdoors. By planning ahead and taking a few extra steps, you can reduce the risk of foodborne illness and enjoy your family and friends, worry-free!

For additional information, contact the Wildcat Extension District, Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County 620-784-5337; Montgomery County 620-331-2690; Pittsburg Office Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP) 620-232-1930; Wilson County 620-378-2167. Our website is <http://www.wildcatdistrict.k-state.edu/> or follow us on Facebook: Wildcat Extension District.

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