



IT'S YOUR HEALTH

Summer Food Safety

The Issue

The risk of foodborne illnesses increases during the summer when temperatures are warmer and people are more likely to be cooking outside at picnics, barbeques, and on camping trips. You can minimize your family's risk of food poisoning by following some simple guidelines about food safety.



Risks of Foodborne Illness

The risk of foodborne illnesses increases in the summer for two main reasons. First, summer weather is often hot and humid, and the kinds of bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses, such as Salmonella and E. coli 0157:H7, multiply quickly in warm, moist conditions. The "danger zone" for the rapid growth of bacteria is from 4° C to 60° C (40° F to 140° F).

Second, summer brings an increase in outdoor activities. When you cook or eat

outside at picnics or on camping trips, you don't always have easy access to the safety features found in kitchens, such as refrigeration and washing facilities.

It is estimated that there are approximately 11 million cases of foodborne illnesses in Canada every year. Foodborne illness, often called food poisoning, occurs when you eat food contaminated with disease-causing organisms, such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

The most common symptoms of foodborne illness include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, and fever. Depending on the type of bacteria, virus or parasites, these symptoms can begin a few hours after eating contaminated food or can be delayed by several days, or even weeks. Most people affected by foodborne illnesses recover completely; some, however, suffer more serious health effects, including such conditions as brain infections and blood poisoning, which in rare cases could be fatal.



The risk of serious health effects after eating contaminated food depends on a number of factors:

- your age, general health status and ability to fight disease; and
- the type and amount of bacteria, viruses, or parasites in the food you eat.

It's always important to use safe practices when handling and preparing food. However, there are extra steps you can take to minimize the additional risks of foodborne illnesses in the summertime.

Minimize Your Risk

The government plays a role, but you are your family's last line of defense when it comes to food safety. Here are some guidelines to help you Fight BAC!® in the summertime.



Select the Safer Alternative

There are certain populations that are more at risk for complications due to foodborne illness. For these groups, it is important to follow food safety rules carefully and to avoid certain foods.

- Older Adults
- People with Weakened Immune Systems
- Pregnant Women

In addition, there are four basic safety steps you should always follow when handling, storing, preparing and shopping for food:

Separate: Make sure to always separate your raw foods, such as meat and egg from cooked foods, fruits, and vegetables to avoid cross-contamination.

Clean: Wash your hands, kitchen surfaces, utensils, and reusable shopping bags with warm, soapy water to eliminate bacteria and reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

Chill: Always refrigerate food and leftovers promptly at 4°C (40°F) or below.

Cook: Always cook food to safe internal temperatures. Health Canada recommends that you check this by using a digital food thermometer. Always refer to the Internal Cooking Temperatures Chart.

- Cooked foods are safe to eat when internal temperatures are:
- 71°C (160°F) for ground meat (beef, veal, lamb and pork)
- 74°C (165°F) for leftover food and boned and deboned poultry parts
- 85°C (185°F) for whole poultry

Also, it is strongly suggested that you pay attention to food recalls and learn more about food safety. The Need More Info? section below lists resources with many more tips on safe food practices. For example, there is a link to charts on the proper internal temperatures for cooked meats, poultry and seafood, as well as the length of time you can store various food items safely in your fridge and freezer.

Government of Canada's Role

Several federal agencies act in partnership to safeguard Canada's food safety. Health Canada sets policies and standards governing the safety and nutritional quality of all food sold in Canada. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) enforces the policies and ensures that necessary warnings are released quickly to the Canadian public.

The Public Health Agency of Canada conducts surveillance on outbreaks of foodborne illness and provides advice to protect the health of Canadians.



As a founding member of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education, Health Canada also participates in public awareness campaigns about safe food practices. An example is the FightBAC!® program, which encourages consumers to think of food safety at every step of the food handling process, from shopping for groceries to reheating leftovers.



Need More Info?

- See Health Canada's web section on **Food-Related Illnesses** at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/ill-intox/index-eng.php
- Visit the Health Canada's ***In Your Kitchen: Safety Tips*** web section for tips on how to safely handle, prepare and cook your food, at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/kitchen-cuisine/index-eng.php
- Visit the Government of Canada's **Food Safety Portal**, at: <http://www.foodsafety.gc.ca/english/introe.asp>
- For **FightBAC®** tips and Food Safety Brochures, visit the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food



IT'S YOUR HEALTH



Safety Education at:
www.canfightbac.org/cpcfse/en/.
This site has handy charts on safe **cooking temperatures and safe cold storage** at:
www.canfightbac.org/en/cookwell/charts/

- Go to the *It's Your Health* web section on **Food and Nutrition** at:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/index-eng.php
for articles on food safety.
- See the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's web section on **Common Causes of Foodborne Illness**, at:
www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/concen/causee.shtml
- Visit the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's web section on **Food Recalls and Allergy Alerts**, at:
www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/recarapp/recaltoce.shtml
- Go to the Public Health Agency of Canada's web section on **Food Safety** at:
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fs-sa/index-eng.php
- Health Canada's **Safe Summer Fun** web section at:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securit/season-saison/summer-ete/index-eng.php
- Health Canada's **Climate Change and Health** web section at:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/climat/index-eng.php
- The World Health Organization - **Food Safety** at:

www.who.int/foodsafety/en/

- For additional articles on health and safety issues go to the *It's Your Health* web section at:
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/iyh

You can also call toll free at
1-866-225-0709
or TTY at 1-800-267-1245*