

# Public Health, Epidemiology and Prevention

# PEP Talk

Pinellas County Health Department • July 2007

## Enjoy good health this summer with these Summer Food Safety Tips

Every year, we hear the same warning: **Handle food carefully in the summer** because foodborne illness - also known as "food poisoning" - is more common in warm weather.

*It's true.* Foodborne illnesses increase during the summer for two main reasons. First, there are natural causes. Most foodborne illness germs grow best in hot temperatures (90° to 110°F). Germs also need moisture to grow best, and our Florida summers are both hot and damp.

Second, there are human causes for the increase in foodborne illness in the summer. We spend more time outside during the summer, cooking outside at picnics, barbecues and on camping trips.

While there are more foodborne illnesses in warm weather, you can **Fight BAC!**<sup>TM</sup> by following these four steps to safer food in the summertime and all year round:

**1. Clean:** Un-washed hands, serving plates and cooking surfaces are a main cause of foodborne illness.

- Wash your hands thoroughly with hot, soapy water before handling food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and handling pets.

**2. Separate:** Cross-contamination during grilling and serving food is a main cause of foodborne illness.

- When packing the cooler for an

outing, wrap raw meat securely and keep meat juices from coming in contact with any other food.

- Wash plates, utensils and cutting boards that held raw meat or poultry before using them again for cooked food.



**3. Cook:** Food is properly cooked when it is heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill harmful **germs**.

- Take your food thermometer along. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often gets brown very fast on the **outside**, so be sure that meat is cooked thoroughly on the **inside**. Check it with

a food thermometer.

- Cook meat and poultry completely at the picnic site. Starting the food ahead of time at home lets germs increase so much that finishing cooking the food later on cannot destroy them.

**4. Chill:** Keep cold food cold!

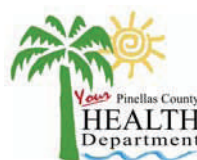
- Keep cold food like lunch meat, cooked meat, chicken and potato or pasta salad in an insulated cooler packed with ice cubes, ice packs or containers of frozen water.
- Consider packing drinks in one cooler and food in another because the cooler with drinks in it will be used more.



**Leftovers?** Food left for more than two hours may not be safe to eat. When the temperature is 90 °F or above, food should not be left out for more than one hour. **When in doubt, throw it out!**

For more information, visit our Summer Safety website at [www.PinellasHealth.com](http://www.PinellasHealth.com)

You can also visit [www.FightBac.org](http://www.FightBac.org) or call the USDA Hotline at 800-535-4555; TTY-800-256-7072.



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# Stay Safe in the Heat

July means more activities in the heat and humidity. Whether you love putting on shorts and being in the warm outdoors, or find it hot and miserable and prefer to be inside, be careful not to let a heat-related illness spoil the day.

Normally, your body keeps cool by letting heat out through your skin and by sweating (perspiration).

If your body doesn't cool properly or doesn't cool enough, then you may suffer a heat-related illness.

Everyone is at risk when the temperature rises above 90 degrees – but the elderly, people with medical conditions and the very young are most at risk.

**Heat-related illnesses can be serious or even deadly if not treated.**

## Ways to stay safe in the summer heat:

\***Dress for the heat.** Wear light-weight, light-colored clothing that will reflect some of the heat. It's also a



good idea to wear a hat or to use an umbrella for shade.

\***Drink lots of water.** Carry water, juice or a sports drink with you and drink even if you don't feel thirsty. Stay away from alcohol and caffeine.

\***Slow down.** If you must do hard work (or play!), try to do it during the coolest part of the day, usually in the morning, between 4:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.

\***Stay indoors** when possible.

\***Take regular breaks** when doing physical activity on warm days.

If you see that you, or someone else, are showing the signs of a heat-related illness, stop and find a cool place to rest and drink healthy fluids – water is best.

## Recognizing and treating heat-related illness:

Heat-related illness usually comes in stages. The sign of the first stage is **heat cramps** in muscles. These cramps – usually in the legs, arms or stomach muscles – can be very painful.

The signs of the next, more serious, stage of a heat-related illness – **heat exhaustion**– include:

- \*Cool, moist, pale skin
- \*Headache
- \*Dizziness, weakness or exhaustion
- \*Nausea or vomiting
- \*The skin may feel hot and may or may not be red or splotchy in color.



## Treating a person with heat cramps or heat exhaustion:

Get the person to a cooler place to rest in a comfortable position. Give a half glass of cool water every 15 minutes. Do not let the person drink too quickly. Do not give liquids with alcohol or caffeine in them, because they can make conditions worse. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths such as towels or wet sheets.

**Heat stroke**, the most serious of all heat-related illnesses, happens when your body cannot control its temperature. Your temperature can go so high that brain damage and death may happen if the body is not cooled quickly.

**Heat stroke is an emergency!  
Call 9-1-1 immediately.**

## Signs of heat stroke include:

- \*Vomiting
- \*Headache, dizziness
- \*Decreased alertness level (seeming “out of it”) or losing consciousness
- \*High body temperature (sometimes as high as 105°F)
- \*Skin may still be moist or the victim may stop sweating and the skin may be red, hot and dry
- \*Rapid pulse (heartbeat)
- \*Rapid breathing

## Treating a person with heat stroke:

**Heat stroke is an emergency!** You need to get help fast. **Call 9-1-1.** Move the person to a cooler spot.

If you have ice packs or cold packs, wrap them in a cloth and place them on each of the victim's wrists and ankles, in the armpits and on the neck to cool the large blood vessels. Watch for signs of breathing problems. Keep the person lying down until help arrives.

Remember, anyone can suffer a heat-related illness, but by taking a few simple precautions, it can be prevented. With a little caution and common sense, you can avoid heat illnesses and enjoy the summer.



For more information about avoiding heat-related illness and staying safe this summer, visit our **Summer Safety** website at [PinellasHealth.com](http://PinellasHealth.com) or visit [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) or [RedCross.org](http://RedCross.org)