



# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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**CDPH Reminds Californians about Safe Food Handling  
During Summer Season**

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is reminding Californians about the importance of safe food handling to prevent foodborne illness while enjoying picnics, barbecues and other outdoor activities during the summer season.

*Salmonella*, *E. coli* and *Campylobacter* are bacteria most commonly recognized for causing foodborne illness in the United States each year. Most of these cases are mild and cause symptoms for only a day or two, but some cases are more serious. However, there are some easy and effective steps you can take to help lessen your chance of contracting a foodborne illness.

“You can protect yourself, your family and your friends from foodborne illness by following simple safety tips for properly preparing and handling food,” said CDPH Director and State Public Health Officer Dr. Karen Smith.

Following these four “C’s” can prevent foodborne illnesses:

**Chill:**

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Bacteria can grow in foods kept in the temperature “danger zone” (41°F-135°F) / (5 °C-58 °C) for an extended period of time.
- Refrigerate leftovers to less than 41°F / 5 °C as soon as possible, but definitely within two hours.
- Use shallow pans and loosely cover while in the refrigerator to allow warm air to escape and facilitate cooling.
- Select cold foods at the grocery store last and put them away first when you get home to keep them cold.
- Refrigerated foods packaged in hermetically sealed or vacuum packaged containers should always be stored in the refrigerator. Storing these types of vacuum packaged products at room temperature could allow the production of Botulism toxin.

- Follow package instructions, especially when it comes to keeping foods refrigerated.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or in a microwave immediately prior to cooking. Never thaw frozen foods on the counter.

### **Clean:**

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Humming “happy birthday” twice while washing hands is a good way to ensure you are washing long enough.
- Scrub cutting boards with hot, soapy water after preparing each item and before moving on to the next food. If your cutting board has deep grooves or cut marks, which make it difficult to clean, consider replacing it.
- Wash and thoroughly rinse utensils and cutting boards with soap and water. Thoroughly cleaning them with a bleach solution (made of one tablespoon of unscented liquid bleach diluted in one gallon of water) will provide effective sanitation action.
- Cover any cuts or skin abrasions on your hands to avoid contaminating the food.
- Keep pets and household chemicals away from food preparation areas.

### **Prevent Cross Contamination:**

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate.
- Use separate cutting boards and knives for chopping ready-to-eat produce and raw meats.
- Never rinse raw poultry because it spreads germs around the kitchen sink, which can serve as a source of contamination for other foods.
- Discard used marinades.
- Use clean utensils and plates to remove cooked foods from grills and pans. Never place cooked foods back into the dish that held the raw or uncooked foods.
- Separate raw and uncooked meats from ready-to-eat items when shopping at the grocery store. Place raw meats in disposable, plastic bags away from other foods.
- If you use reusable shopping bags for groceries, designate specific bags for meats to avoid cross-contamination. Wash and dry bags as they become soiled.
- Store bags used for groceries at home in a manner which protects them from other sources of contamination such as pets, children, and chemicals.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator in water-tight containers to prevent juices from leaking onto ready-to-eat and cooked foods.

### **Cook:**

- Use an accurate thermometer to measure the final internal temperature of meat and meat products. Color is an inaccurate way to determine if meat is sufficiently cooked.

- Measure the temperature in the thickest part of the food, ensuring the thermometer does not touch bone or the cooking pan which can give you an inaccurate reading.
- Wash thermometers after each use.
- Wait until foods are completely cooked before taste testing.
- When using a microwave to cook or reheat food, be sure to rotate or stir the food to facilitate thorough heating.
- Additionally, some labels recommend a “resting time” for the food after cooking before it should be served. Those instructions should be followed in order to allow the heat to evenly distribute.

Visit CDPH’s [Cooking Raw Meats](#) webpage for additional information.

[www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)