

# WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

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## GOOD DECISIONS - Food Safety During Summer Months



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During the summer months, we tend to gather more often with friends and family. These gatherings often take place outdoors and are centered around or include food. These factors, among other things, increase the likelihood of foodborne illnesses. [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) recommends following these four steps to avoid foodborne illnesses.

**Clean.** Bacteria can be found all around our homes, including on our hands, food, utensils, and countertops. Begin by washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with [plain soap](#)

[and water](#). Be sure to wash your hands again after key times like handling raw meat, seafood, or uncooked eggs, before eating, and after touching garbage. Fruits and vegetables should be washed without soap prior to consumption. Washing meat, poultry, and eggs is not necessary and could increase the risk of contamination. Surfaces and utensils should be washed with hot, soapy water for disinfection before and after use.

**Separate.** Cross-contamination, the transfer of bacteria from one place to another, can pose a big problem! Prevent cross-contamination by ensuring that you use separate knives, utensils, and

cutting boards for produce and raw meat. Once food is cooked, use clean utensils and platters for serving.

**Cook.** First, you want to ensure the internal temperature of your food has reached the proper minimum [cooking temperature](#). Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature at the thickest part of the food. When grilling, hamburgers should be cooked to 160°F, chicken to 165°F, and steak to 145°F (after resting 3 minutes). If food is not served immediately, it should be kept at 140°F or above by using a warming tray or slow cooker.

**Chill.** This step can be easily forgotten during a barbecue or party. Food should never be left out of the cooler or off the grill for more than two hours. If the temperature is above 90°F where the food is located, that time drops to 1 hour. Plan to serve cold food items on trays with a bed of ice below and be sure to have coolers available for food storage.

Following these simple summer food safety tips will help to make sure your fun in the sun doesn't get cut short!

