Barry-Eaton District Health Department
Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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Summer Food Safety

Summer is the perfect season for family gatherings, graduation parties, potlucks, BBQs, and more. Practicing good food safety at these events helps reduce your risk of getting sick from a foodborne illness (such as salmonella or norovirus). Sometimes, there can even be an outbreak of a foodborne illness affecting many people. The National Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 48 million (1 in 6) people every year in the U.S. get sick from a foodborne illness. The CDC lists five main causes of foodborne illnesses:

1) **Keeping potentially hazardous food at the wrong temperature.** Some food quickly grows bacteria when it is held between 40-140° F, also called the "danger zone". Keep raw and prepared food that could spoil cold (40° F or below in the refrigerator or packed in ice) or hot (140°F or above in a crockpot, stove/oven, or on the grill) until being served. Any potentially hazardous food found to be in the "danger zone" for four or more hours should not be consumed and should be thrown away.

2) **Cooking potentially hazardous food to the wrong temperature.** Meat and dairy products can become contaminated with bacteria during processing, so it is important to thoroughly cook these items to a temperature that kills bacteria that can make you sick. For example, ground beef and bratwursts should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F as read by a food probe thermometer. A full temperature chart can be found here: https://www.fsis.usda.gov/safetempchart

3) **Cross-contaminating food and surfaces.** Follow these simple rules when handling raw meat or eggs:
   - Don't rinse raw poultry in the kitchen sink. This can cause bacteria to splatter.
   - Wash hands, utensils, equipment, and work surfaces with hot, soapy water before and after they come in contact with raw eggs and raw meats.
   - Thoroughly rinse and/or scrub fruits and vegetables before cutting them up.

4) **Failing to practice good hygiene or follow smart health rules when sick.** Properly washing your hands is one of the simplest and most effective means of prevention against illness. When sick (especially when experiencing vomiting or diarrhea) you should avoid making food for others or frequenting public gatherings until you have been symptom-free for 48 hours.

5) **Food from unsafe sources.** Food, water, and even ice for consumption should all come from an approved supplier. Unregulated food and water sources pose a much greater risk for illness. Unregulated foods may be contaminated, diseased, or otherwise not fit for human consumption. Approved suppliers are regularly inspected and must maintain a food safety benchmark that protects consumers.

At public events where the food is prepared and served at the same location, the Barry-Eaton Health Department (BEDHD) is responsible for assessing and licensing temporary food service operations. If you think your event may require a temporary food service license, please contact BEDHD's Environmental Health Division at (269) 945-9516 (Barry) or (517) 541-2615 (Eaton). Food prepared at home and shared at community gatherings is not inspected, but it may pose a much greater risk as attendees may not know if the food, kitchen, or the person(s) preparing the meal were following good food safety practices as outlined above. Symptoms of common foodborne illnesses include diarrhea, fever, dehydration, stomach cramps, upset stomach, nausea, and vomiting. People with these symptoms should call their health care provider and drink plenty of water, if possible, to avoid getting dehydrated. For more information on food safety and foodborne illness visit https://www.foodsafety.gov/index.html.

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