

# NEWS RELEASE

## FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND COOKOUTS AND PICNICS

### *Good Hygiene & Temperature Control Keys to Preventing Food Poisoning*

The Allegheny County Health Department is offering food safety tips for Memorial Day weekend cookouts and picnics.

“Don’t let carelessness spoil your food and your holiday, whether you’re eating in your own backyard or at a picnic away from home,” said County Health Director Dr. Bruce W. Dixon.

The key to preventing food poisoning is good personal hygiene, along with temperature control and adequate cooking of potentially hazardous foods, according to health officials.

Washing your hands is not only important before preparing foods but also between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination or the transfer of bacteria.

Washing with soap and warm water is best, but if they won’t be available on your outing be sure to bring along antibacterial towelettes or lotion.

Meat, poultry and seafood should be cooked thoroughly and the best way to know if these foods have been cooked enough is to check their temperature with a meat thermometer.

Safe cooking temperatures are 160 degrees for hamburgers; 170 degrees for chicken breasts; 180 degrees for a whole chicken, wings and thighs; 160 to 170 degrees for pork; 145 to 170 degrees for unground beef; and 145 degrees for seafood. Hot dogs and other processed or precooked meats such as kolbassi should be reheated to 160 degrees.

If you don’t have a meat thermometer, follow these guidelines but remember they’re not as reliable as temperature as an indicator of doneness: beef and pork should be

grilled until all the pink is gone, poultry until there is no red in the joints and fresh fish until it flakes with a fork.

Use different plates to carry raw meats and cooked meats to and from the grill so bacteria-laden juices left on the plate from raw meat don't come in contact with and contaminate cooked meat.

Once perishables such as meat, poultry, fish and any foods containing eggs or dairy products are cooked and served, any leftovers should be kept below 40 or above 140 degrees. If these foods can't be kept hot or cold, they should be thrown out after two hours.

Make sure you have a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice and take along a refrigerator thermometer to make sure the cooler keeps the temperature below 40 degrees.

Food safety tips for picnics also are available by visiting [www.achd.net](http://www.achd.net).