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Public Health Urges Food Safety For the July 4th Holiday

CLEVELAND – This week many people will fire up their grills in celebration of the July 4th holiday and should keep these safety tips in mind. Unsafe handling of food products can cause serious illness, including E.Coli, salmonella, as well as other related health issues. It's important that every cook follow these important food safety tips for grilling outdoors and avoid a trip to the emergency room. Here are some of the most important food safety tips for grilling outdoors:

Wash Your Hands

You should always wash your hands before and after handling raw meat and poultry, after touching dirty kitchen equipment, utensils, dishes or work surfaces and when hands are visibly soiled. Hand washing is the most important action to stop spreading infection and disease.

Keep Cold Food Cold

Keep meat and poultry refrigerated until ready to use. Only take out the meat and poultry that will immediately be placed on the grill.

Cook Thoroughly

Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often browns very fast on the outside. Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature. Beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts and chops can be cooked to 145 °F. Hamburgers made of ground beef should reach 160 °F. All cuts of pork should reach 160 °F. All poultry should reach a minimum of 165 °F. NEVER partially grill meat or poultry and finish cooking later.

Keep Everything Clean

Be sure there are plenty of clean utensils and platters. To prevent foodborne illness, don't use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meat and poultry. Harmful bacteria present in raw meat and poultry and their juices can contaminate safely cooked food.

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Reheat Completely

When reheating fully cooked meats like hot dogs, grill to 165 °F or until steaming hot.

Keep Hot Food Hot

After cooking meat and poultry on the grill, keep it hot until served at 140 °F or warmer. Keep cooked meats hot by setting them to the side of the grill rack, not directly over the coals where they could overcook. At home, the cooked meat can be kept hot in an oven set at approximately 200 °F, in a chafing dish or slow cooker, or on a warming tray.

Serve the Food on a Clean Platter

When taking food off the grill, use a clean platter. Don't put cooked food on the same platter that held raw meat or poultry. Any harmful bacteria present in the raw meat juices could contaminate safely cooked food.