

Summer Food Safety Tips

You'll likely spend time outside with family and friends this summer at a picnic or backyard barbecue. However, if you aren't careful about handling foods and beverages during these cookouts, you're putting yourself and others at risk for potential food-related illnesses.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 6 people get sick from a foodborne illness each year.

Bacteria multiply especially fast in the summer heat, making outdoor cookouts prime breeding grounds for E. coli and salmonella. Symptoms of foodborne illnesses may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramping.

Prevent food poisoning at picnics and barbecues with these four simple steps from the CDC:

1. **Clean.** Wash cooking equipment, dishes and utensils between uses. Be sure to clean the grill's surface after each use and wash cutting boards after preparing raw meat. Germs can survive in many places, so washing your hands and surfaces is critical.

2. **Separate.** Use one cooler for drinks and one for food. It's also important to separate raw foods (e.g., poultry, seafood and eggs) from those ready to eat. Lastly, never eat anything left out of a refrigerator or cooler for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.
3. **Cook.** Food is safely cooked when the internal temperature is high enough to kill germs that can make you sick. The best way to know if food is cooked properly is by using a meat thermometer. For example, burgers and hot dogs should be cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit and chicken to 165.
4. **Chill.** Refrigerate food promptly since bacteria can rapidly multiply if left at room temperature. The "danger zone" for bacterial growth is 40-140 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you have mild food poisoning, it's important to stay hydrated. Keep in mind that more serious cases, which often include a fever and dehydration symptoms, require medical attention.

Reaping the Health Benefits of Gardening

Interest in home gardening continues to rise amid economic concerns. Although the annual Axiom Gardening Outlook Study found overall decreases in time spent gardening and plans to expand gardens, younger generations have been picking up gardening tools in recent years and plan to continue.

Generation Z (69.2%) and millennials (51%) are expected to spend more time gardening in 2025.

There's no denying that gardening has numerous benefits. It's a good way for households to get healthier and cheaper food, but it also helps people reach their movement goals. The CDC counts weeding, mulching and mowing as moderate exercises, while raking and digging are vigorous.

Sleep Tips for the Long Summer Days

As the days grow longer and temperatures rise, many people find falling and staying asleep increasingly difficult. In addition, people may have busy social schedules for the summer. Summer sleep disturbances can be frustrating, but with a few practical tips, you can improve your sleep quality despite the seasonal changes. Try these tips:

- **Keep a consistent schedule.** Late nights can happen in the summer, and that's OK. Overall, try to stick to a regular and consistent sleep schedule to regulate your circadian rhythm.
- **Create a cool sleep environment.** Keep your bedroom cool with fans and air conditioning, or prop open doors and windows.
- **Use lightweight fabrics.** Opt for lightweight and moisture-wicking pajamas and bedding.

In addition to physical activity and healthier eating habits, consider these health benefits of gardening:

- Increased vitamin D levels that are essential for body functions
- Reduced cortisol levels that trigger stress
- Improved mood
- Relaxation and reduced anxiety
- Boosted self-esteem

If you haven't started gardening yet, it's not too late to start and reap the benefits of time outside. Talk to your doctor to learn more about ways to manage your well-being.

Materials like cotton, linen, bamboo and silk can help you stay comfortable.

- **Try a sleep mask.** Longer daylight hours can disrupt your sleep cycle, so wearing a sleep mask can help create a dark environment. Experts advise against blackout curtains, as some light alerts your body that the day is coming.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated in the heat, but avoid large amounts right before bed to prevent waking up for bathroom trips.

Remember, a good night's sleep is essential for overall health and well-being. Small changes can improve your summer slumber, but talk to your doctor for further sleep guidance.

Recipe of the Month

Green Bean and Rice Casserole

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients

- ½ cup onion (chopped)
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- ½ cup rice (uncooked)
- 15-oz. can low-sodium green beans (drained)
- 15-oz. can low-sodium diced tomatoes
- 1 cup water

Preparations

1. In a medium-sized pan, cook the onions in vegetable oil until they start to turn light brown.
2. Add the rice, green beans, tomatoes and water.
3. Bring to a boil.
4. Cover the pot with a lid and cook over low heat for 10 minutes.

Nutritional Information

(per serving)

Total calories	114
Total fat	2 g
Protein	3 g
Sodium	183 mg
Carbohydrate	21 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Total sugars	3 g

Source: MyPlate