



# NEWS

R E L E A S E

Illinois Department of Public Health

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## Tips for a Safe and Healthy Holiday Weekend and Summer

### *Safe food handling, swimming and insect repellent*

**SPRINGFIELD** – Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Damon T. Arnold reminds you of some steps to take for a safe and healthy Fourth of July and the rest of the summer.

#### **FOOD SAFETY**

Picnics and cookouts top the list of summer activities. But remember, special precautions need to be taken when preparing and serving food during warm weather to avoid foodborne illnesses like salmonellosis.

The United State Department of Agriculture has four basic food safety steps:

- **Clean:** Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food. Make sure surfaces that come into contact with raw and cooked foods are clean before you start and are washed frequently.
- **Separate:** Raw meats and poultry should be prepared separately from produce and cooked foods. Use separate cutting boards when chopping raw meats and produce, as juices from raw meats may contain harmful bacteria that can cross-contaminate ready-to-eat foods.
- **Cook:** Your food thermometer is the most important tool that will tell you if your food is thoroughly cooked, as color is not a reliable indicator of doneness. The safe minimum internal temperature to kill any harmful bacteria in steaks, roasts, chops and fish is 145°F, while ground beef should reach 160°F. Take extra care with frozen hamburgers as these take longer to reach a safe internal temperature throughout the patties. It is important to measure the temperature in several areas of your burgers. All poultry and fully cooked meats like hot dogs should be grilled to 165°F or until steaming hot.

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- **Chill:** Perishable food should never sit out for more than two hours. If the temperature is above 90°F, perishable foods should not sit out more than one hour. Refrigerate or freeze leftovers promptly, and discard any food that has been out too long.

Keep hot food hot (140°F or above), and cold foods cold (40°F or below).

The symptoms of most types of food poisoning include severe cramps, fever, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and bloody diarrhea. Symptoms can begin from 30 minutes to three or more days after eating contaminated food. If symptoms are severe or last longer than two days, contact a physician.

## **SWIMMING SAFETY**

Whether swimming at a beach or at a pool, do not enter the water alone unless a lifeguard is on duty. Sadly, most deaths from drowning occur within a few feet of safety.

At a swimming pool, take the following precautions:

- If no lifeguard is on duty, do not let children swim unless they are accompanied by a responsible adult who knows lifesaving techniques and first aid.
- Look around the pool area to be certain lifesaving devices, such as a floating ring buoy and shepherd's hook, are readily available for emergency use.
- To reduce the risk of eye, ear, nose or throat infection from contaminated water, swim only in pools in which water quality is properly maintained. The water should appear clear, be continuously circulated and be maintained at a level that allows free overflow into the gutter or skimmer. There should not be a strong odor of chlorine.

At the beach, take the following precautions:

- Look for water that is reasonably clear and free of floating materials and odors. Avoid swimming at beaches where there are large populations of ducks, geese or gulls. The waste produced by these birds causes high bacteria levels in the water.
- Look for movement in the water; it helps keep the water clean. Do not swim in stagnant or still water.
- Do not swim at any beach right after a heavy rain. Runoff following a heavy rain may result in a high bacteria level.
- Do not ingest beach water through your mouth or nose to avoid possible gastrointestinal or sinus infection.

## **PROTECTION AGAINST MOSQUITOES AND WEST NILE VIRUS**

The best way to prevent West Nile disease or any other mosquito-borne illness is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Precautions include:

- Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially between dusk and dawn.

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- When outdoors, wear shoes and socks, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt, and apply insect repellent that includes DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535 according to label instructions. Consult a physician before using repellents on infants.
- Make sure doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or other openings. Try to keep doors and windows shut, especially at night.
- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, including flowerpots, wading pools, old tires and any other receptacles. Water in bird baths should be dumped and changed weekly to eliminate mosquito larvae.

## **TICKBORNE ILLNESS**

Infected ticks can transmit diseases including ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia and Lyme disease through their bites. While the number of reported cases of tick-borne illness varies from year to year, many of these diseases have been increasing in recent years.

The best way to protect against tick-borne illnesses is to avoid tick bites by taking the following precautions:

- In areas where ticks may be present, be sure and check yourself, children and other family members every two to three hours for ticks.
- Tuck long pants into your socks and boots. Wearing light-colored pants makes ticks easier to see. Wear a head covering or hat for added protection.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET (30 percent or less) to exposed skin (except the face). If you do cover up, use repellents for clothing containing DEET or permethrin to treat clothes (especially pants, socks and shoes) while in locations where ticks may be common. Permethrin tick repellents should be applied only to clothing according to label instructions.
- If you let your pets outdoors, check them often for ticks. Ticks can “hitch a ride” on your pets, but fall off in your home before they feed.
- Remove any tick promptly. Do not try to burn the tick with a match or cover it with petroleum jelly or nail polish. Do not use bare hands. The best way to remove a tick is to grasp it with fine-point tweezers as close to the skin as possible and gently, but firmly, pull it straight out. Do not twist or jerk the tick. If tweezers are not available, grasp the tick with a piece of cloth or whatever can be used as a barrier between your fingers and the tick.
- Wash the bite area and your hands thoroughly with soap and water; apply an antiseptic to the bite site. If you experience a rash that looks like a bull's-eye, or a rash anywhere on the body or an unexplained illness accompanied by fever following a tick bite, you should consult your doctor.
- Keep your grass mowed and keep weeds cut around your home.

Following these precautions will help you stay safe and healthy this holiday and throughout the summer.

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