

**INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY**  
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**Grilling Season Reminders**

Memorial Day weekend signals the traditional start to the grilling season. That makes this a good time to apply good grilling practices as you prepare food for your family. The information for this column came from Sam Beattie, Iowa State University Food Safety Extension Specialist.

Use a thermometer to be sure burgers are fully cooked. To take the temperature of a hamburger, hold the patty with tongs and push the point of the thermometer into the side of the burger going toward the center. The thermometer should hit the thickest part of the hamburger and read 160°F. This temperature kills the bacterium *E. coli* O157:H7 and other illness causing bacteria.

If you do not have a thermometer, cook the meat until it is brown and the juices are clear without any bloodiness or cloudiness. However, it cannot be guaranteed that the meat is hot enough without using a thermometer.

Follow these food safety tips: Keep it cold -- When picnicking and eating outdoors during the heat of the summer, food can warm up and get to the temperatures that allow illness causing bacteria to grow the fastest. Pack food on ice or keep in the refrigerator until just before serving to help prevent illness. The two hour rule is the key -- you have two hours at room temperature for perishable foods. On very hot days, however, food warms more quickly and a more realistic safe time is about one hour. Salads can be kept cold longer by using two bowls - the one with the salad, nested in a larger one, with ice.

Meats should be thawed in the home refrigerator before taking them to the picnic and should be kept on ice until just before cooking. If marinating the meat, it should still be placed in the refrigerator. Once the meat is removed, the marinade should either be discarded or, if used as a sauce, brought to a rapid boil to kill the bacteria.

Use different utensils, platters and tongs for raw meat then for the grilled meat. Bacteria from the juices of the raw meat will contaminate the cooked meat. Wash platters and cutting boards with hot soapy water and rinse with hot water to remove and kill the illness-causing bacteria. If storing meat on ice, use heavy plastic bags to avoid contaminating the ice or a separate ice chest for the meat.

Remember to wash your hands often and thoroughly. They become contaminated easily with a variety of illness-causing organisms.

Chill food quickly. Leaving food out for longer than one or two hours will cause it to warm up to temperatures that allow illness-causing bacteria to grow rapidly. Once again the two hour or one hour rule applies. Put the leftovers back on ice; or discard them if you can't keep them cold.

For more information, contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.