

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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The summer grilling season is here. This is a good time to remember and apply good grilling practices as you prepare food for your family. The following information is from Sam Beattie, Iowa State University Food Safety Extension Specialist.

Beattie recommends using 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, Beattie advises cooking the meat until it is brown and the juices are clear without any bloodiness or cloudiness. "However, it cannot be guaranteed that the product is hot enough without a thermometer," Beattie said.

He also offers the following 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.

"Food packed on ice or kept in the refrigerator until just before serving will help prevent illness," Beattie said. "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 taken 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.

Do not use the same platter for raw meat as 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.

"And don't forget to wash your hands often and thoroughly," Beattie said. "They easily become contaminated 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," reminds Beattie.

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