

Daily News

Tuesday, July 19, 2022

Dealing with foodborne illness is no picnic

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By [The Daily News Staff](#) | on July 19, 2022

Submitted by the Mid-Michigan District Health Department

Mother Nature has been serving up a good dose of sunshine and warm temperatures, which is perfect for picnics, family reunions and backyard barbeques. These ideal weather conditions help make these events more enjoyable, but there is one downside- bacteria can rapidly multiply in the hot summer sun, which can put quite a damper on an otherwise good time.

Foodborne bacteria can cause illness within as little as 20 minutes or up to three days of eating contaminated food. Symptoms can include vomiting; diarrhea; abdominal pain; and flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, and body aches.

This not-so-pleasant scenario can put a damper on an otherwise enjoyable time, so safe food handling when eating outdoors is critical.

The first step to safe food handling is to clean: Wash hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, and after using the bathroom, handling pets, or changing diapers. Always rinse raw fruits and vegetables under running water, and avoid cross-contamination by cleaning counters, cutting boards, utensils, and dishes with hot soapy water after preparing each item.

The second step is to separate: Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs from other foods. Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs unless the plate has been washed in hot, soapy water. When packing a cooler, wrap uncooked meats and poultry separately, and put them on the bottom to prevent raw juices from dripping onto other foods. A separate cooler for storing raw food is ideal.

The third step is to kill harmful bacteria by cooking food to the right temperature: Visual cues, like color, are not a guarantee that food is safe. Don't guess! Use a metal stemmed thermometer to check when meat and poultry are safe to eat. Foods are safe to eat when internal temperatures are 145oF for chops, roasts, and steak; 165oF for poultry; and 160oF for ground meat.

The fourth step is to keep cold food cold. Perishable foods normally kept in the refrigerator must be kept in a cooler with freezer packs or ice to keep the temperature at or near 40o F. Also put leftovers back in the refrigerator or cooler as soon as you are done eating. The simple rule is: When in doubt, throw it out!

For more information and food safety tips, visit www.fda.gov/media/79871/download.

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Health Department's beach monitoring program underway

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The Mid-Michigan District Health Department received a grant through Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy to monitor a select number of inland lake beaches in the district for E. coli, including Crystal Lake in Crystal Township. — Submitted photo

The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) received a grant through Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) to monitor a select number of inland lake beaches in the district for E. coli.

The beaches being monitored in health department's jurisdiction are Park Lake in Bath, Sleepy Hollow State Park in Laingsburg, Motz Park in St. Johns, Clinton Lakes in St. Johns, Paul Hubscher County Park in Sumner, Reed Park in North Star and Crystal Lake in Crystal Township.

The health department's Environmental Health Sanitarians began water sampling in early June and will continue sampling until early September. Water samples are collected once a week with results posted on EGLE's Beach Guard website (egle.state.mi.us/beach/). On this website you can also see results for all beaches being monitored in the state of Michigan.

If sample results are above full body contact standards (E.coli contamination exceeding 300 Ecoli per 100 milliliters of water), the beach will not be closed but the health department will post an advisory, informing people that the beach does not meet standards for swimming. In these cases, the health department will also notify operators of the beach and provide them with recommendations on how to correct the situation. Once the E. coli level falls below full body contact standards, the advisory will be lifted, and the signs will be removed.

Signs and symptoms of E. coli usually begin three or four days after exposure to the bacteria and can cause diarrhea, stomach cramping, nausea, and vomiting.

For more information on the health department's beach monitoring program, visit mmdhd.org/recreational-water.