



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**CONTACT:**

[Michael.Claffey@illinois.gov](mailto:Michael.Claffey@illinois.gov)

### **IDPH Urges Illinoisans to Celebrate July 4th Safely, Offers Food Hygiene and Other Summer Safety Tips**

*IDPH Reminds Public to Protect Themselves from Sunburn and Seasonal Pests Like Mosquitos & Ticks; and to Monitor Air Quality*

**CHICAGO** – Ahead of the 2023 Fourth of July Holiday weekend, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is reminding celebrants who are grilling out or packing a picnic to follow proven food handling safety tips to protect friends and family from foodborne illnesses. IDPH is also urging Illinoisans to protect themselves from pests like mosquitos and ticks. And with air quality having reached unsafe levels in recent days due to smoke from Canadian wildfires, the public is urged to monitor local air quality conditions through the [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) federal website.

“As Illinois gets ready to celebrate our nation’s Independence Day, I want to remind Illinoisans to take the necessary steps to be safe and healthy this Fourth of July,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “Avoid foodborne illnesses at cookouts and picnics by keeping cold foods cold and cooking hot foods to the proper temperature. Avoid insect-borne illnesses and fight the bite by wearing insect repellent and avoiding tick infested areas such as woods or high grasses. And, avoid sunburn and heat illness by applying sunscreen, staying hydrated, and wearing lightweight, light-colored clothing.”

And with air quality in the spotlight this week, Director Vohra advised that fireworks displays can deteriorate air quality and adversely affect the health of people with heart or lung disease. These individuals should monitor local air quality and take appropriate protective steps, such as wearing a high-quality mask if they are attending fireworks displays, or view them from a distance.

Following are a series of health tips from IDPH, including food safety; water safety; preventing sun burn and heat stroke; tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses; and fireworks safety.

#### **Food Safety:**

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It can be difficult to keep food cold during warm weather, especially while picnicking or traveling. Keep meat, poultry, and seafood refrigerated until ready to grill. When transporting, keep foods 40°F or below in an insulated cooler. One tip to help keep your cooler below 40°F is to pack beverages in one cooler and food in another. The cooler with the beverages will likely be opened more frequently, causing the temperature inside the cooler to fluctuate. You can also keep coolers in the shade and out of the direct sun.

To guard against cross-contamination, food should be kept separate. Raw meat, poultry, and seafood should be stored and prepared separately from fruits, vegetables, cheeses, salads, and even cooked foods.

Before grilling, thaw food safely in the refrigerator, cold water, or microwave. Always marinate food in the refrigerator, no matter what kind of marinade you're using. Never thaw or marinate meat, poultry, or seafood on the counter. Harmful germs can multiply quickly at room temperature.

Wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Wash work surfaces, utensils, and the grill before and after cooking.

Before you start grilling, use a moist cloth or paper towel to clean the grill surface. If you use a wire bristle brush, inspect the grill's surface before cooking. Wire bristles from the grill cleaning brush may dislodge and stick into food on the grill.

When grilling, make sure food is cooked to a safe temperature by using a food thermometer. Follow these temperature guidelines to ensure grilled food is safe for consumption:

- 145°F – whole cuts of beef, pork, lamb, and veal (then allow meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating)
- 145°F – fish
- 160°F – hamburgers and other ground beef
- 165°F – all poultry and pre-cooked meats, like hot dogs

After grilling keep food at 140°F or warmer until served.

Throw out marinades and sauces that have touched raw meat juices, which can spread germs to cooked foods. Use clean utensils and a clean plate when you take cooked food off the grill.

After the meal, divide leftovers into small portions and place in covered, shallow containers. Make sure all leftovers are kept in the freezer or fridge or on ice within two hours after cooking, or one hour if it is above 90°F outside.

And know the symptoms of most types of food poisoning, which include diarrhea, severe cramps, fever, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea. Symptoms can begin

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from 30 minutes to three or more days after eating contaminated food. If symptoms are severe or last longer than two days, contact a doctor or health care provider.

More food safety tips and information about foodborne illnesses and symptoms can be found on the [CDC Food Safety website](#).

### **Water and Swimming Safety:**

Whether at the beach, on the lake or in a swimming pool, keep the following safety precautions at top of mind:

- Supervise young children around water
- Always use life jackets and secure personal flotation devices
- Avoid alcohol while supervising children and before or during swimming, boating, or waterskiing
- Shower before entering a swimming pool and do not swim when ill with diarrhea
- Be aware of the local weather conditions and forecast, especially watch for thunderstorms with lightening
- Pay attention to lifeguards and posted instructions

### **Sun and Heat:**

When the temperature is elevated, guard against sunburn and heat illness:

- Never leave anyone, including pets, alone in a closed, parked vehicle
- Apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher 30 minutes before going outside
- Increase fluid intake - drink more liquid than thirst indicates; avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loosing-fitting clothing
- Be aware of heat exhaustion symptoms: heavy sweating, weakness, dizziness, nausea, clammy skin, pale or flushed complexion, and fast and shallow breathing
  - If present, be sure to move the person to a cooler place; remove or loosen tight clothing; apply cool, wet cloths; and give cool water to slowly drink
- Be aware of heat stroke symptoms - hot, dry skin, hallucinations, chills, throbbing headache, high body temperature, confusion/dizziness and slurred speech
  - If present, be sure to call 911; quickly cool the person in a cool bath or wrap wet sheets around them; if the victim refuses water, is vomiting or shows a decreased level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink

## **Ticks and Mosquitoes:**

Whether camping, hiking or in the backyard, guard against insect-borne illnesses. Mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus and ticks can transmit Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Ehrlichiosis and other serious infections.

- WEAR INSECT REPELLENT. Apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions
- Avoid being outside during prime mosquito-biting hours, dusk to dawn
- Avoid tick-infested areas, such as the woods and high grasses
- Check people and pets for ticks every 2 to 3 hours
- Remove ticks attached to the body promptly to help prevent diseases. Use tweezers to remove the tick and call a health care provider if a rash, fever or body aches develop during the 1 to 3 weeks following a bite.
- Check with a veterinarian about preventing tickborne diseases in pets as they can carry ticks into the home

## **Fireworks Safety:**

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal encourages everyone to [leave fireworks to the professionals](#). Every year across the state fireworks cause accidental fires, burn injuries, loss of limbs, and even in some cases deaths.

For more summer safety tips, checkout: [Summer? No Sweat. A Summer Survival Guide.](#)

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