

Food Handling, Preparation And Storage During Summer Months, HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital Offers Safety Tips

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O'FALLON – Preventing a food-borne illness can be a bit more challenging during the summer months when temperatures rise, and more people enjoy outdoor picnics, barbeques and camping.

HSHS Division Manager of Infection Prevention Stephanie Thannum, RN, MS-HCNA, CIC, shared that bacteria multiply in hot and humid conditions so they grow faster than in cooler months of the year. In fact, she said that bacteria can potentially double in as little as 20 minutes.

“If you want to have a healthy and happy summer gathering, be sure to keep your food temperature and time in mind. And if in doubt, throw it out,” Thannum said. “Make sure food is not left out for long periods of time in the heat. It is also important to follow proper food handling and preparation safety guidelines and always washing hands before and after food prep, and before consuming.”

HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital recommends the following food safety practices:

- Do not use the same utensils, cutting board and dishes for raw food and cooked food.
- Thaw and marinate food in the refrigerator – not on the counter.
- Discard marinades and sauces that have touched raw meat.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before peeling or cutting to prevent germs on the food’s peeling from spreading to the inside.
- Use a meat thermometer to ensure foods are cooked thoroughly.
- 145° F for fish, steaks and roasts
- 160° F for ground beef, pork and lamb
- 165° F for chicken and turkey

Discard food left unrefrigerated for more than two hours. When it’s above 90° F, reduce this time to one hour.

Wash your hands often when preparing, handling and storing food.

Keep hot food hot and cold food cold. If using a cooler, put raw foods on the bottom with ice packed on top.

Allow food to cool to room temperature before storing it in the refrigerator.

Store leftovers in smaller containers rather than one large container so it cools faster.

Food-borne illnesses affect 48 million people each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms of a food-borne illness can include upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, fever and nausea.

HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital’s emergency room is open 24/7 to provide expert care when you need it most.

More information about food-borne illnesses and safe food handling practices can be found on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) website and at [FoodSafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov).

