

*Elder Tips*  
**Summer Food Tips**

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With all the outbreaks recently with food borne illness it is now more important than ever to practice proper food preparation and storage. To avoid heat fluctuations and cross contamination keep cold food cold and hot foods hot. Hot foods should be above 140 degrees F when served, and cold foods need to be at or below 40 degrees F. Keep foods out of the temperature danger zone when prepared, stored, and while serving. Temperatures from 41 to 139 degrees allow harmful bacteria the ability to survive, grow, and make you sick. Temperatures from 70 to 120 degrees allow bacteria to grow more rapidly, and this can lead to food borne illnesses. Do not save foods you have served at a picnic for later unless they have been kept at safe temperatures. When in doubt, throw it out.

Food preparation can also create hazards that could lead to food borne illness. Fresh fruits and vegetables must be washed thoroughly, especially vegetables and fruits that mature above ground. These items have the potential to be covered in pesticides, fertilizers, and raw sewage. For example, take the time to wash the outside of melons, apples, citrus, tomatoes, or peppers before you cut them so bacteria don't get into the fruit or meat of the vegetable. When working with meat and poultry, avoid cross contamination. Do not allow raw foods to have contact with ready to eat foods. Clean and sanitize work surfaces and utensils after each use, between foods being prepared, and keep your meat and poultry in a separate cooler when preparing for a picnic.

It is a common myth that mayonnaise in salads is the cause of many food borne illnesses. It is not the mayonnaise. When pastas and potatoes are cooked, there are changes within them which promotes food borne illness to grow. Whether part of a hot or cold dish, they need to be within the safe serving range. When storing foods use an airtight see through dated container so you can tell what is in it. Food items over a week old, even stored properly, should be disposed of. Take a little extra time when preparing, serving, and storing food items to stay healthy.

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