



Live Well, Work Well

June 2025

Summer Food Safety Tips

You'll likely spend time outside with family and friends this summer at a picnic or backyard barbecue. However, if you aren't careful about handling foods and beverages during these cookouts, you're putting yourself and others at risk for potential food-related illnesses.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 6 people get sick from a foodborne illness each year.

Bacteria multiply especially fast in the summer heat, making outdoor cookouts prime breeding grounds for E. coli and salmonella. Symptoms of foodborne illnesses may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramping.

Prevent food poisoning at picnics and barbecues with these four simple steps from the CDC:

1. **Clean.** Wash cooking equipment, dishes and utensils between uses. Be sure to clean the grill's surface after each use and wash cutting boards after preparing raw meat. Germs can survive in many places, so washing your hands and surfaces is critical.

2. **Separate.** Use one cooler for drinks and one for food. It's also important to separate raw foods (e.g., poultry, seafood and eggs) from those ready to eat. Lastly, never eat anything left out of a refrigerator or cooler for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.
3. **Cook.** Food is safely cooked when the internal temperature is high enough to kill germs that can make you sick. The best way to know if food is cooked properly is by using a meat thermometer. For example, burgers and hot dogs should be cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit and chicken to 165.
4. **Chill.** Refrigerate food promptly since bacteria can rapidly multiply if left at room temperature. The "danger zone" for bacterial growth is 40-140 degrees Fahrenheit.

If you have mild food poisoning, it's important to stay hydrated. Keep in mind that more serious cases, which often include a fever and dehydration symptoms, require medical attention.

Reaping the Health Benefits of Gardening

Interest in home gardening continues to rise amid economic concerns. Although the annual Axiom Gardening Outlook Study found overall decreases in time spent gardening and plans to expand gardens, younger generations have been picking up gardening tools in recent years and plan to continue.

Generation Z (69.2%) and millennials (51%) are expected to spend more time gardening in 2025.

There's no denying that gardening has numerous benefits. It's a good way for households to get healthier and cheaper food, but it also helps people reach their movement goals. The CDC counts weeding, mulching and mowing as moderate exercises, while raking and digging are vigorous.

Sleep Tips for the Long Summer Days

As the days grow longer and temperatures rise, many people find falling and staying asleep increasingly difficult. In addition, people may have busy social schedules for the summer. Summer sleep disturbances can be frustrating, but with a few practical tips, you can improve your sleep quality despite the seasonal changes. Try these tips:

- **Keep a consistent schedule.** Late nights can happen in the summer, and that's OK. Overall, try to stick to a regular and consistent sleep schedule to regulate your circadian rhythm.
- **Create a cool sleep environment.** Keep your bedroom cool with fans and air conditioning, or prop open doors and windows.
- **Use lightweight fabrics.** Opt for lightweight and moisture-wicking pajamas and bedding.

In addition to physical activity and healthier eating habits, consider these health benefits of gardening:

- Increased vitamin D levels that are essential for body functions
- Reduced cortisol levels that trigger stress
- Improved mood
- Relaxation and reduced anxiety
- Boosted self-esteem

If you haven't started gardening yet, it's not too late to start and reap the benefits of time outside. Talk to your doctor to learn more about ways to manage your well-being.

Materials like cotton, linen, bamboo and silk can help you stay comfortable.

- **Try a sleep mask.** Longer daylight hours can disrupt your sleep cycle, so wearing a sleep mask can help create a dark environment. Experts advise against blackout curtains, as some light alerts your body that the day is coming.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated in the heat, but avoid large amounts right before bed to prevent waking up for bathroom trips.

Remember, a good night's sleep is essential for overall health and well-being. Small changes can improve your summer slumber, but talk to your doctor for further sleep guidance.

Recipe of the Month

Green Bean and Rice Casserole

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients

- ½ cup onion (chopped)
- 2 tsp. vegetable oil
- ½ cup rice (uncooked)
- 15-oz. can low-sodium green beans (drained)
- 15-oz. can low-sodium diced tomatoes
- 1 cup water

Preparations

1. In a medium-sized pan, cook the onions in vegetable oil until they start to turn light brown.
2. Add the rice, green beans, tomatoes and water.
3. Bring to a boil.
4. Cover the pot with a lid and cook over low heat for 10 minutes.

Nutritional Information

(per serving)

Total calories	114
Total fat	2 g
Protein	3 g
Sodium	183 mg
Carbohydrate	21 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Total sugars	3 g

Source: MyPlate



MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

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Navigating Social Anxiety in the Summer

Summer is a time for sunshine, outdoor activities and social gatherings, with ample opportunities to unwind and connect with others. However, for those experiencing social anxiety, these gatherings can be intimidating. There are several key reasons why social anxiety may spike during the summer:

- **Summer-onset seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**—Unlike the more commonly known “winter blues,” some people experience SAD during the summer.
- **Social overload**—Summer often brings a packed social calendar filled with parties, barbecues, beach outings and other events.
- **Lack of routine**—The unstructured nature of summer can disrupt daily routines, leading to increased anxiety.
- **Fear of missing out (FOMO)**—Social media amplifies FOMO as people post and talk about their summer adventures.

Managing Social Anxiety

While summer social events can be daunting for those with social anxiety, it's still possible to enjoy the season. Consider

these strategies for navigating social anxiety:

- **Plan ahead.** If you have a social event coming up, familiarize yourself with the venue and attendees.
- **Set boundaries.** It's OK to say no to events if you feel overwhelmed.
- **Focus on enjoyable activities.** Engage in summer activities that truly bring you peace and joy.
- **Practice relaxation techniques.** Deep breathing, meditation or yoga can help manage anxiety symptoms and provide a sense of calm.
- **Participate in social situations gradually.** For events or large groups of people that stress you out, it's OK to start with smaller, low-pressure gatherings and work your way up to larger events.
- **Challenge negative thoughts.** Social anxiety often stems from negative thoughts, so remind yourself of your strengths and past positive social experiences.

With a bit of effort and self-compassion, you can enjoy the summer months in a way that feels comfortable and fulfilling for you.

Taking a Social Media Break for Your Well-being

There are risks to mental health from social media use, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Such risks include depression, social comparison, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content and sleep disruption. Social media use also has the potential to worsen loneliness, anxiety and self-worth. Despite this, many people turn to social media out of habit or to relax.

Consider the following tips for reducing social media use:

- **Find alternative sources of relaxation.** If you turn to social media to help you unwind, try exchanging it for another activity, such as walking, reading, crafting, listening to music, baking, yoga, meditating or playing with a pet.
- **Try other ways to connect.** If you use social media to communicate with others, consider alternatives, like volunteering, calling friends or family, inviting people over for dinner, joining community clubs, chatting with neighbors or taking an exercise class.
- **Seek other means of entertainment.** Engage in

other forms of entertainment. For example, try listening to podcasts, reading, learning something new, or going to a local museum or art show.

Some individuals may be able to spend a weekend offline, while others will need to detox from social media for a month to notice a positive change.

Setting Boundaries

For some, quitting social media altogether may be an unrealistic goal. Focus instead on creating a healthy relationship with social media by:

- Unfollowing accounts that leave you with negative emotions
- Deleting any negative comments or messages
- Striving not to compare yourself to others
- Protecting your energy and engaging when it matters
- Prioritizing your mental health

If social media hurts your mental health, take a break and try an alternative source of entertainment, connection and relaxation. For further guidance, contact a mental health professional.

Take Charge of Your Health



Drink More Water

Proper hydration is key to ensuring your body operates efficiently. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine recommends that women drink 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) and men consume 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids daily. The actual amount of water you need, though, varies based on activity level, location and overall health. This daily recommendation accounts for fluids from water, other beverages and food.

About 20% of an individual's daily fluid intake comes from food and the rest from drinks. Try these tips to help you drink more water:



Track your intake. Many health, fitness and water-tracking apps can help you understand whether you drink enough water. Some water bottles can also monitor your daily intake.



Set reminders. Your phone or smartwatch can provide hourly reminders throughout the day to drink water. Device notifications can help you develop a consistent hydration habit.



Keep a water bottle with you. Carrying a reusable water bottle will make drinking easier when you're thirsty and may provide an ongoing visual cue to drink more water.



Infuse your water. Add fruits, vegetables and herbs—like lemon, mint, cucumber, ginger or mint—to your water. This can make water more flavorful, thus encouraging you to drink more.



Make it a challenge. Challenge a friend, family member or co-worker to drink more water. A friendly competition can hold everyone accountable while helping them meet their water goals.