



MICHIGAN STATE  
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Extension

# Senior Health Line

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## Summer Food Safety



Summer brings on a whole slew of food safety issues. Whether it is keeping hot foods hot at a picnic or cold foods cold in high temperatures, we

want to keep all the foods we eat safe. There are four basic principles to remember for safe food –

**\*Clean** - Make sure all surfaces and utensils are clean before and after use. Start with washing your hands. Wash them before you start cooking. Wash again after you touch raw foods. Be sure to wash after coming in from outside, after touching a pet or going to the bathroom and then again, before you eat. Handwashing is not only important in keeping food safe, but it is also very important in keeping us from getting sick from other sources. Surfaces that come in contact with raw meats, fish or poultry, clean with warm soapy water and rinse with fresh clean water. This includes cutting boards, utensils and containers holding raw foods that are going to be reused. If you put chicken on a platter before cooking, it must be washed thoroughly before the cooked product is put back on that platter to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. It is not necessary or recommended to rinse meat or poultry before cooking. Rinsing increases the risk of contaminating surfaces in your kitchen. If cooked properly, there is no need to rinse meats, fish or poultry. Be sure to wash all fresh produce in fresh running water before eating or preparing them for consumption. There is no need to wash produce with produce wash or vinegar, just fresh, potable running water for 20 seconds.

**\*Separate** - Cross contamination occurs when

bacteria or other pathogens are transferred from one food to another. Preventing cross contamination is a key factor in keeping food safe and preventing foodborne illness. Preventing cross contamination begins in the grocery store. Keep raw foods separate from ready to eat foods. Place meats, fish and poultry in plastic bags at the bottom of the grocery cart to prevent them from dripping juices on other foods. When putting foods in the refrigerator, place meat, fish and poultry in sealed bags, containers or on platters to avoid dripping onto other foods. Store these foods on the bottom shelf of the fridge to reduce the incidence of cross contamination. Eggs should be stored inside the refrigerator on a shelf in the carton and not in the door. If possible, use separate cutting boards for fresh produce and raw meats and always clean between uses. Once cutting boards become worn or become hard to clean, replace them to keep food safe.

**\*Cook** - Meats, poultry and seafood need to be cooked to a specific internal temperature to kill off pathogens and ensure food safety. All poultry needs to be cooked to a minimum of 165 degrees F. The temperature needs to be checked with a food thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the meat you are cooking. That means in a whole chicken, check the temperature in the inside of the thigh. If it is a chicken breast, insert the thermometer in through the side to the center of the breast. Ground meats should be cooked thoroughly to an internal temperature of 160 degrees F. Again, use a thermometer inserted through the side into the thickest part of the product. Steaks and roasts and fish need to be cooked to 145 degrees F. Eggs or dishes containing eggs must be at least 160 degrees F to ensure safety.

**\*Chill** - When bringing foods home from the grocery store, foods that require refrigeration must

be kept cold. Bacteria in foods thrive and grow at temperatures between 41 and 140 degrees F. Go directly home after grocery shopping in hot weather. The interior of a car can get very hot in a short period of time during the summer. Run other errands before grocery shopping to help keep food safe. You may also want to bring a cooler packed with ice to keep food cool during transportation. Refrigerate perishable foods promptly after returning home. Marinate foods in the refrigerator and never on the counter or outside. If you plan on serving some of the marinade as a sauce, reserve some of the marinade separately from the raw meat. Do not reuse marinade. Leftover foods should be refrigerated promptly. They should not be out of refrigeration for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is over 90 degrees F. Leftovers need to be reheated to at least 165 degrees F before being eaten. By following these four basic food safety practices; keep foods and surfaces clean, keep raw foods and ready to eat foods separated, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold, you can reduce the chances of developing foodborne illness and enjoy a food safe summer.

### **West Nile Virus in Michigan**

It only takes one mosquito bite from an infected mosquito to contract the West Nile virus. So the best way to protect yourself from the disease is to prevent mosquito bites. The West Nile virus has already been confirmed for the 2017 summer in Michigan. Birds carry the virus in their blood. Mosquitos become infected by the virus when they bite infected birds.

West Nile virus can cause encephalitis, inflammation of the brain or meningitis, swelling of the lining of the brain or spinal cord. Symptoms of West Nile virus can vary greatly. Some people who become infected will show no symptoms at all. Others will experience mild symptoms such as headache, slight fever and body aches. Some people develop a rash and swollen glands from the disease. Other people, especially the elderly or those with underlying health issues, the virus can cause neurological damage including severe headaches, high fever, confusion, muscle weakness, stiff neck, coma and even death. Symptoms typically occur 3-15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Treatment involves support for the symptoms

exhibited. If symptoms are severe, hospitalization may be necessary. Last year there were 43 serious cases of West Nile virus reported in Michigan and 3 deaths associated with West Nile virus in Michigan. Nationally, there were over 2,000 reported cases of the virus with 94 deaths reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Mosquitos lay their eggs in or around water. Drain all standing water around your house to reduce the mosquito population nearby. Be sure to have tight fitting screens without holes on windows and keep doors shut to keep mosquitos out of your home.

Mosquitos are most active between dusk and dawn. Stay away from tall grass and weeds where there are a lot of mosquitos. Consider using a repellent containing DEET. Be sure to use it according to the directions on the label.

Some birds do not exhibit symptoms of the West Nile virus. Others such as crows and blue jays are more sensitive to West Nile virus and become sick and die. If you observe dead birds, you are asked to report it to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. For more information on the West Nile virus, go to: [www.cdc.gov/westnile](http://www.cdc.gov/westnile).

### **Fresh Peach Salsa**

2 fresh peaches peeled, pitted and diced  
1 tomato, seeded and chopped  
½ sweet onion chopped  
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped  
1 fresh jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped  
1 garlic clove, minced  
2 teaspoons cider vinegar  
1 teaspoon lime juice

Mix all ingredients together.  
Chill for at least 2 hours  
before serving. Makes 8  
servings



Nutritional Value per serving:

Calories 20; Fat 0 grams; Sodium 58 milligrams  
Carbohydrates 5 grams; Protein 1 gram

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