FN659 (Reviewed Oct. 2026)

Keep Food Safe when Camping and Hiking

Summer is a great time to enjoy the outdoors. Whether you're planning a weekend camping trip or an afternoon hike, food safety is important to prevent foodborne illness from becoming an unwanted souvenir. Follow these tips to keep food safe while you're enjoying the great outdoors.

Plan Ahead!

- To avoid leftovers, plan your menus ahead of time with portion sizes in mind. Plan meals that contain common ingredients and require one pot to reduce your ingredient list and lighten your load.
- Find out if campfires are allowed at your destination or if you'll have to bring a portable stove or grill.
- When packing food for a hiking trip, it's a good idea to choose items that do not require refrigeration. Canned meat, poultry and fish; peanut butter and jelly; beef jerky; dried fruits, nuts, noodles and soups; breads; crackers; powdered milk and fruit drinks are excellent choices.
- Be organized. Airtight containers and re-sealable plastic bags make useful tools that can be recycled and used for many other campsite purposes.



Keep it Clean!

- Find out if your camping or hiking destination has a source of clean water. If not, pack bottled water, disposable wipes and biodegradable camping soap.
- Assume that stream and river water is unsafe to drink. Packing bottled water to drink is convenient and cost-effective. Another option is to purchase purification tablets or filtration equipment to remove harmful microorganisms from streams and river water.
- Handle meat, poultry and fish carefully. Double wrap or place the packages in plastic bags at the bottom of your cooler to prevent juices from dripping on other foods.
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before beginning food preparation.
- To prevent cross-contamination, use a spatula or clean tongs for removing meat or poultry from the grill. Place on a clean plate.

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Keep Cold Foods Cold!

- Pack foods directly from the refrigerator into an insulated cooler in reverse-use order (first food packed is last to be used). A block of ice keeps longer than ice cubes. Use clean, empty milk cartons to freeze blocks of ice or use frozen gel packs.
- Transport coolers in the passenger area of your vehicle. Keep coolers in the shade or insulate the cooler with a blanket or tarp when you reach your camping or hiking destination.
- When your camping or hiking adventure has ended, discard all perishable foods if there is no ice in the cooler or if the gel packs are no longer frozen.



Keep Hot Foods Hot!

- Remember to pack a food thermometer to check the doneness of meat. Insert the thermometer in the thickest part of the food, away from bone, fat or gristle. Ground beef should reach an internal temperature of 160 degrees Fahrenheit; whole poultry, poultry breasts and ground poultry, 165 degrees. Beef, pork, veal, lamb steaks, roast and chops should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 degrees*.
- Discard any food left out for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees. When in doubt, throw it out! If campfires are allowed, discarded leftover food should be burned, not dumped.

*Allow three-minute rest time.

Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., R.D., L.R.D.
Food and Nutrition Specialist

Tami Totland, R.D., L.R.D.
Former Program Assistant

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www.ag.ndsu.edu/food

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