



FOR RELEASE  
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## **Yukoners reminded to take care when preparing summer meals**

WHITEHORSE—Yukon residents are reminded to take some common sense precautions when barbequing or picnicking this summer to avoid hazards that cause food poisoning. Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Brendan Hanley issued the reminder today.

"We all need to ensure that what we eat, or the way we prepare our food doesn't make us sick," Hanley said. "Food borne illnesses can range from mild, to serious lifetime dialysis, to deadly. High risk groups such as infants and young children, adults over 60, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable."

It is always important for people to pay attention to how food is prepared and stored in order to keep everyone safe and healthy. Summer time can be especially challenging with barbeques and picnics as there is sometimes no way to keep foods cold or out of the sun. Preparing meats for the barbeque can be risky especially for certain kinds of food poisoning including the infection caused by E. coli when consuming undercooked beef.

"Food can be contaminated by bacteria, viruses or parasites that can cause illness. Depending on the type and amount of foodborne pathogens, people can become ill within hours or days, or sometimes even months after consuming contaminated food or drink," Hanley added.

Food that is prepared by manufacturers, along with local grocery stores and restaurants, is generally safe because they take pride in following standards and Health Officers verify that current food safety practices are followed. However, these Health Officers do not inspect your home and it is important for you to follow these same food safe practices.

Yukoners should focus on four basic tips to help prevent food poisoning:

- Keep raw foods separate from cooked foods to avoid cross-contamination.
- Wash hands and surfaces often to avoid the spread of bacteria.
- Chill: Keep cold food cold. Letting food sit at unsafe temperatures puts you at risk of food-borne illnesses.
- Cook: Make sure that you kill harmful bacteria by cooking food to proper temperature.

For more information on foodborne pathogens and how to prevent them, visit [www.hss.gov.yk.ca/10leastwanted.php](http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/10leastwanted.php) or e-mail [hss@gov.yk.ca](mailto:hss@gov.yk.ca) for your copy of the foodborne illness brochure, 10 Least Wanted.

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See additional summer food safety tips attached.

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## **Tips for food safety while barbequing, picnicking or camping**

### **Cross Contamination**

- Wrap raw meats and poultry securely and put them on the bottom of the cooler to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods.
- Wash all plates, utensils and cutting boards that touched or held raw meat or poultry before using them again for other foods.

### **Wash Hands and surfaces**

- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before handling food, and after handling raw meats or poultry, using the bathroom or touching pets.
- Find out if there will be a source of clean water. If not, bring water for preparation and cleaning, or pack disposable wipes and / or sanitizing lotions and paper towels.
- Take clean plastic bags or containers in which to store leftover food.
- Always wash raw fruits and vegetables in clean water.
- Perishable foods such as luncheon meats, cooked meats and potato or pasta salads, which are normally refrigerated, must be kept in an insulated cooler with freezer packs or blocks of ice to keep them at 4° C (40° F) or colder.

### **Keep foods cold**

- Refrigerate or freeze food the day before you pack it for a trip.
- With raw meats and poultry on the bottom, pack your cooler in reverse order with foods you expect to use first on the top.
- Keep the cooler in the shade or sheltered from direct sunlight. Keep the cooler closed as much as possible.
- Use one cooler for beverages and another for perishable foods. The beverage cooler will likely be opened more frequently.
- Put leftovers back in the cooler as soon as you are finished eating.
- Discard all perishable foods once the ice or freezer packs in your cooler have melted.
- The simple rule is: when in doubt, throw it out.

### **Cook**

- Do not guess. Use a digital instant-read food thermometer to check when meat and poultry are safe to eat.

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