



# NEWS



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## **Here's to Health, Safety, and Summer!**

*Enjoy food, swimming, and warm summer nights the healthy way*

**BLOOMINGTON, IL-** Summer has officially started! It's the time for cookouts, exploring the great outdoors, and spending time at the pool. The McLean County Health Department wants to help keep the fun in summer by sharing a collection of health and safety reminders.

### **Indulging in summer's abundant fruits and vegetables and the fun of eating outdoors**

Whether they're fruits and vegetables from your garden or the local farmers' market, thorough washing and careful preparation will help keep unwanted germs and dirt out of your meal. Although anyone can get a foodborne illness, young children, pregnant women, people over 65 years of age, and people with weakened immune systems, are more likely to get sick and to have a more serious illness.

When preparing fruit trays and salads, remember:

- Wash your hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under cool, running, potable water even if you do not plan to eat the skin or rind. Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush. Baking soda can be used as a mild and safe abrasive. Avoid using soap, detergent, or bleach solution to wash fresh fruits or vegetables, as these solutions can affect flavor and may be dangerous if ingested.
- Avoid cross-contamination when preparing fruits and vegetables. Cross-contamination occurs when a clean work surface, such as a cutting board or utensil (knife) or uncontaminated food, is contaminated by dirty work surfaces, utensils, hands or food. Be sure to wash your hands (as well as the knife and cutting surface) before preparing any ready-to-eat foods such as salad, fresh fruit or a sandwich.
- Store leftover produce that has been cut, sliced, or cooked, in clean airtight containers in the refrigerator at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or less.

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The risk of food poisoning increases during the summer because harmful bacteria grow quickly in warm, moist conditions. Whether cooking on the grill or packing a picnic basket, following four basic food safety steps will help keep your food safe to eat. Remember to:

- CLEAN: wash hands and surfaces often
- SEPARATE: don't cross-contaminate
- COOK: to safe temperatures
- CHILL: refrigerate promptly

### **Beating summer's heat with a dip in the pool**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 1 in 5 American adults do not know that swimming while ill with diarrhea can heavily contaminate the water in which we swim and make other swimmers sick. As the temperatures rise this summer, so will the number of cases of recreational water illnesses (RWIs) as more and more people visit public pools and other water play areas. Recreational water illnesses are caused by germs and chemicals found in the water we swim in and are spread by swallowing, breathing in mist or aerosols of, or having contact with contaminated water. In Illinois, the most common RWI is diarrhea.

While chlorine and other pool disinfectants will kill most germs that cause RWIs in less than an hour, some diarrhea causing germs like *Cryptosporidium* can stay alive for days even in well maintained pools. To protect yourself, your family, and other swimmers, it's best to help keep germs out of the water in the first place.

To help keep swimming pools clean, safe, and fun this summer, residents are encouraged to follow these simple guidelines:

1. Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea
2. Shower with soap before you get into the water
3. Don't pee or poop in the water
4. Don't sit on water jets
5. Don't swallow the water
6. Take kids on bathroom breaks every 60 minutes
7. Check diapers every 30-60 minutes and change diapers away from the water

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## **Enjoying warm summer nights outdoors**

Hiking, camping, and watching firework displays make great summer memories but can also expose residents to the threat of West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses. The most effective way residents can protect themselves is to reduce the number of mosquitoes around homes and neighborhoods and to take personal precautions to avoid mosquito bites. Follow the 3Rs for protecting against mosquitoes:

**REDUCE**...the number of mosquitoes by getting rid of containers outside that hold water

**REPEL**...use insect repellent when outdoors between dusk and dawn and if weather allows, wear clothing that covers exposed skin

**REPORT**...contact the Health Department about areas where water sits for more than a week and to report newly dead birds

The Health Department wants residents to have a fun and healthy summer by taking steps to protect themselves and others from unwanted germs and viruses. Additional information about food safety and mosquito-borne illnesses can be found on the Health Department website: <http://health.mcleancountyil.gov/>

The McLean County Health Department is dedicated to the prevention and control of disease through health promotion, early intervention, and health protection within the county. We are your Partners in Prevention.

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