

# Hiking and Camping with Food Safety in Mind



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It's finally summer – a time to explore the great outdoors. Camping and hiking can be the perfect escape to enjoy the beauty nature has to offer. But whether you set out for a few hours or a few days, keep important food safety principles in mind.

## 1. Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold

Bacteria multiply rapidly within the "danger zone," between 40°F and 140°F. Keep foods out of the danger zone by keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold. This means not only cooking and reheating foods to a safe temperature, but also properly storing foods that require refrigeration. Perishable foods should not be left unrefrigerated for more than two hours, or more than one hour if it's over 90°F outside. Luckily, with a few simple steps, you can keep food safe even without the luxury of a refrigerator or microwave.

**Short Hikes:** If you are going out for a short hike, bring along nonperishables or chilled foods. To keep cold foods cold, freeze overnight or cover them with frozen gel packs or frozen juice boxes and bottled water. These frozen beverages will thaw during the hike while keeping your food cold.

**Overnight Camping:** If you are camping overnight, cook foods to the proper internal temperature. Pack a food thermometer to ensure foods have reached a safe temperature, because you can't rely on sight or taste alone to determine doneness.

- Cook burgers made of raw ground beef, pork, lamb and veal to an internal temperature of 160°F.
- Heat hot dogs and any leftover food to 165°F.
- Cook all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F.

- Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145°F. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming.

Only eat the cold items if they remain below 40°F. In most circumstances, eat cold foods on the first day. However, if you are car camping (driving to your site) you will have the luxury of being able to bring a cooler. To keep food coldest – and safest – load food straight from the fridge into your cooler just before you leave the house, rather than packing it in advance. And remember, don't eat any perishable food that has been out of the cooler for more than two hours, or more than one hour in temperatures above 90°F.

## **2. Don't Forget to Wash**

Bacteria will spread easily in an unclean environment. Bring soap, water, clean towels and hand sanitizer. Always wash your hands, utensils and all surfaces before preparing and eating food.

## **3. Keep Drinking Water Safe**

Don't drink water directly from a lake or stream no matter how clean it looks. Some pathogens thrive in remote bodies of water and there is no way to tell what is in the water. Bring a full bottle of purified water and replenish your supply from tested public systems. If that is not possible, purify any water from the wild.

One way to make water safe is to boil it to kill microorganisms. Bring water to a rolling boil and then boil for at least one minute. If water is muddy, allow it to stand for a while until the silt settles to the bottom. Then boil the clear water off the top. At higher elevations, boil for several minutes because the boiling point of water is lower.

Another option is water purification tablets and water filters. The purification tablets kill most waterborne bacteria, viruses and some parasites. Because some parasites and larger bacteria are not killed by purification tablets, also be sure to use a water filter. These water filtering devices must be 1 micron absolute or smaller. Over time, purification tablets lose their potency, so replace them often. Water purification tablets, filters and sanitizing tablets can be purchased at camping supply stores.

## **4. Prevent Cross-contamination**

Bacteria from raw meat and poultry can easily spread to other foods from dripping juices, hands or utensils. Avoid cross-contamination by washing your hands before and after handling food, and using different platters and utensils for raw and cooked meats, seafood, eggs and poultry. Double-wrap meat and poultry when transporting in a cooler to prevent raw meat juices from dripping onto other foods.

## **5. Always Clean Up**

Keep food safety tips in mind when washing dishes and cleaning up the campsite. You can buy biodegradable camping soap, but use it sparingly and keep it out of fresh bodies of water because it will pollute them. Wash dishes at the campsite, not the water's edge, and make sure all water is purified. As you get ready to leave the campsite, leftover food should be burned or carried out with you. Bring garbage bags to dispose of any trash.