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**TMHD ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO  
BARBECUE SAFELY THIS SUMMER**

Summer is the perfect time for cooking and eating outdoors, but Trumbull Monroe Health District (TMHD) wants everyone to know that the warm temperatures, that make eating outside so appealing, can provide the ideal environment for bacteria to multiply. Following safe food handling practices at summer picnics and barbecues are the best protection against food borne illnesses.

“Everyone needs to be careful about food safety, especially during the summer months,” said Patrice Sulik, TMHD Director of Health. “How you store, handle and cook your food is very important when it’s hot outside. This is particularly true if you are preparing foods for young children, older adults or people with weakened immune systems.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, case reports of food borne illnesses for some of the most common bacteria, such as E.coli 0157:H7, increase during the summer months. The data also show that people aged 50 and older suffer more severe complications from food borne illnesses than those who are younger.

Here are some tips from the Health District’s food service staff for preparing a safe outdoor meal, whether it’s a picnic at the beach or a gourmet cookout in your backyard.

- **Wash hands:** Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, and dry hands with a paper towel before preparing foods, after handling raw meat or before

eating. Clean hands will help prevent the spread of potentially illness-causing microorganisms.

- **Defrost Safely.** Defrost completely before cooking and never at room temperature. The best ways to defrost is in the refrigerator.
- **Marinate in the Refrigerator.** Always use the refrigerator to marinate, never at room temperature. If you wish to use marinate for basting or dipping, reserve a separate portion in the refrigerator until use. Never re-use marinate.
- **Precook Completely.** Some people like to pre-cook food to reduce grilling time. Be sure the food is fully cooked to destroy harmful bacteria. Partially cooking food is safe only if the cooking process is not interrupted and the food goes on the grill immediately. Never partially cook on the grill to finish cooking later.
- **Keep it Cold.** If carrying food to a picnic site, use an insulated cooler with enough ice or ice packs to keep the food 45 degrees Fahrenheit or less. Pack food straight from the refrigerator to the cooler. Put perishable foods in one cooler and beverages in another. Keep cooler out of the sun, if possible.
- **Keep it Clean.** Have plenty of clean utensils and platters, or use new, single service plastic or paper. Don't use the same platter or utensils for raw food and cooked items. Be sure to pack clean soapy sponges, cloths or towelettes. Wash hands often with soap and warm water.
- **Cook it Thoroughly.** Use an accurate meat thermometer and cook food to proper temperatures. Internal temperature for beef steaks should be 145 degrees Fahrenheit, chicken should be 165 degrees Fahrenheit, and hamburgers should be 158 degrees Fahrenheit. Meat and poultry cooked on the grill can appear cooked on the outside while actually being undercooked inside.

- **Serve and store promptly.** Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold until just ready to eat. Store foods in the refrigerator, freezer or iced cooler within one to two hours of serving. Anything left out longer should be discarded.

Following are some tips on how to barbecue safely this summer.

1. Get in the habit of cleaning the grill after each use. Scrub the grill racks to remove marinade and/or particles of food.
2. Make sure plenty of gas is in the tank before lighting the grill. Be sure to clean the gas jets every year.
3. Have a hose, bucket of sand, or fire extinguisher on hand, if you are using a charcoal grill.
4. Keep an eye on kids while the grill is hot, even after the food has been removed.

For more information about food safety, contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854.

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The mission of the Trumbull Monroe Health District is to protect the health of residents, and to prevent disease. For more information on the Trumbull Monroe Health District call 452-5195, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. or visit [www.tmhd.org](http://www.tmhd.org).