

Roundtable Safety Moment

Keeping Your Food Safe



Summary

Foodborne illnesses are more common in the summer, thanks to warmer temperatures and less-than-perfect food handling. Whether you're hiking, camping, or cooking under the stars, planning your menu carefully and practicing safe food handling can keep your meals—and your Scouts—safe. Just remember the three C's: **Keep it Cold, Keep it Clean, and Cook it Thoroughly.**

General Information

The most frequent illness encountered while camping is acute gastroenteritis. Symptoms like nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps can strike hours—or even days—after eating contaminated food.

Keep It Cold

Bacteria multiply fastest between **40°F and 140°F**—this is known as the *danger zone*. Since you often won't have a heat source on the trail, pack perishable food already chilled or frozen, and insulate it with **ice, frozen gel packs, or even frozen juice boxes**. Once thawed, eat it promptly.

Keep It Clean

Clean hands are your first defense. Use **soap and water or disposable wipes** before handling food. Wash all produce before cutting, and always work on clean surfaces. Prevent cross-contamination by keeping **raw meats and their juices separate** from ready-to-eat foods.

If water is limited, use hand sanitizer with **at least 60% alcohol**—but remember, sanitizers don’t eliminate all germs. Soap and water are still best. And in the backcountry, follow **proper water treatment protocols** when washing, cooking, or drinking.

Cook It Thoroughly

For many Scouts, this may be their first time behind the skillet. **Don’t rely on color** to judge doneness—meat can look cooked before it's safe. A digital thermometer is a great tool to keep in your chuck box. Refer to reliable sources for the **minimum safe internal temperatures**, and always **clean the thermometer** between uses.

REFERENCES

- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Keep Food Safe—Summer and Vacations”](#)



- [U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “Foodborne Illnesses: What You Need to Know”](#)
[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives”](#)

