



For Immediate Release:

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Safety First this Labor Day Weekend

Tips from Public Health on Food, Sunburn and West Nile virus

LOS ANGELES – As we celebrate Labor Day, many Southern Californians will be gathering with family and friends to enjoy the long weekend playing at the beach, camping, barbecuing in the backyard, or attending the opening of the LA County Fair. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is offering several tips to help everyone enjoy their holiday weekend free of food-borne illnesses, sunburn or West Nile virus.

Food Safety Tips

"Cooks should only have to worry about whether there's enough food on the table for a gathering and not whether the food will make people sick. If the dishes are not properly prepared or cooked, food can contain bacteria and other infectious agents that could cause food poisoning," said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. "Simple food safety precautions such as washing your hands before and after handling raw food and maintaining correct temperatures during and after cooking will ensure your guests walk away with great memories of a good meal instead of a nasty illness."

Some common symptoms that may be caused by food-borne illness include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, dehydration, and fever. Most of these types of illnesses are caused by three problems: allowing "cold" foods, like potato salad, to get warm or "hot" foods, like casseroles or meatballs, to get to room temperature; handling food with contaminated hands; and not cooking foods such as meat or chicken thoroughly.

Before you barbeque or prepare food:

- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap before and after handling any food, especially raw meat, poultry, or seafood.
- When marinating for long periods of time, it is important to keep foods refrigerated. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on cooked food.
- Keep raw foods, especially meat, poultry, or seafood, away from cooked foods. Do not use the same plate, tray, cutting board or utensils for raw and cooked foods.
- Keep meats, salads, and other perishable foods in the refrigerator until you are ready to use them. If you store your food in a cooler, keep the temperature at or below 40° F (4° C), and keep the lid closed as much as possible. Pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to insure a constant cold temperature. Store your cooler in the shade, away from birds and animals.
- Barbeques should be pre-heated before cooking. When using a charcoal grill, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 to 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
- Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables, such as cantaloupe and watermelon, before consumption or cooking.

During cooking:

- Always check the temperature of the food before you stop cooking. Use a food thermometer to make sure food has reached a safe internal temperature. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends all cooked meats and poultry rest for three minutes before cutting to ensure optimum safety and quality.



- Beef, veal, lamb steaks, roasts: at least 145° F (63° C).
- Ground beef (hamburgers), ground pork: 160° F (71° C).
- All poultry, including ground meats: 165° F (74° C).
- Fish: 145° F (63° C); should be opaque and flake easily with a fork.
- Shrimp, lobster, crabs: 145 °F (62.8 °C); meat should be pearly and opaque.
- Clams, oysters, mussels: shells should be open when cooked. Discard shells that remain closed after cooking.

After cooking:

- Put cooked food on a clean plate or tray.
- Large batches of food that are prepared the day before, such as beans and potato salad, should be placed in shallow containers to quickly cool to 40° F (4° C) in the refrigerator.
- Don't use leftover marinade or sauce from the raw food on the cooked food.
- Keep all food covered to prevent cross contamination and to avoid attracting flies.
- Eat food as soon as it is ready.
- Leftovers should be placed in shallow containers, and refrigerated. Food may be covered when cool.
- Leftovers should be reheated to 165° F (74° C) before eating.
- Eat leftovers within two days.

For more information on food safety, check out <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>.

For information on food safety at fairs and festivals, visit www.cdc.gov/features/fairsandfood.

Avoid Sun Damage:

- Stay in the shade whenever possible, but especially between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 and UVA and UVB protection. Reapply often, especially after going into the water or excessive sweating.
- Keep newborns out of the sun. Sunscreen may be used on babies six months and older.

West Nile Virus Tips

“We are seeing a period of increased transmission of this virus that can cause serious disease,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “The holiday weekend allows everyone to enjoy the outdoors for an extended period, so whether you are gardening, working on a fix-it yourself project, or spending time with the family be sure to wear an approve mosquito repellent, especially around dawn or dusk. Taking this simple precaution can greatly reduce the risk of mosquito bites, the primary pathway to human infection.”

Los Angeles County has seen an increase in West Nile virus (WNV) activity this season; residents are urged to take precautions while outdoors by following the tips below.

Decrease risk of infection:

- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn and dusk.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever you are outdoors.
- Repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of eucalyptus, when used as labeled, are effective defenses against mosquitoes.
- Check your window screens for holes.



- Do not allow water to collect and stagnate in old tires, flowerpots, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, or other containers. These are prime breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools; drain water from pool covers.
- Stock garden ponds with goldfish or other mosquito-eating fish. These eat mosquito eggs and larvae.
- Empty and wash birdbaths and wading pools weekly.

WNV is spread from humans through the bite of an infected mosquito; mosquitoes can become infected by biting a bird that carries the virus. Most mosquitoes do not carry the virus and most people bitten by a mosquito are not exposed to the virus. The virus is not spread through person-to-person contact, or directly from birds to humans.

In most cases, people who are infected with West Nile virus never become sick, or have only very mild symptoms that include fever, headache, nausea, body aches, and a mild skin rash. Symptoms of WNV could appear within three to 12 days after infection. Fewer than one in 150 people who are bitten by an infected mosquito become severely ill, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In these rare cases, the virus can cause encephalitis and death. The elderly and those with weakened immune systems are most at risk for developing severe symptoms, which may require hospitalization. Recovery from any infection with the virus can take months to years and include symptoms of fatigue, malaise, and depression. There is no specific treatment for this disease.

More information:

- Information on West Nile Virus by phone: (800) 975-4448.
- Information on West Nile Virus on the web: <http://westnile.ca.gov/>
- Dead birds may be reported by calling (877) 968-2473 or logging onto <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/disintro.htm>.
- Stagnant swimming pools or “green pools” should be reported to the Public Health Environmental Health Bureau at (626) 430-5200, or to a local vector control agency.

Where to call with questions about mosquitoes:

Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District: (562) 944-9656

Los Angeles County West Vector Control District: (310) 915-7370

San Gabriel Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (626) 814-9466

Antelope Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District: (661) 942-2917

Compton Creek Mosquito Abatement District: (310) 933-5321

Pasadena City Health Department: (626) 744-6004

City of Long Beach Vector Control Program: (562) 570-4132

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov, visit our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/lapublichealth, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lapublichealth, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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