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IDPH Urges Illinoisans to Steer Clear of Seasonal Summer Hazards And Celebrate July 4th 2025 Safely

Don't Get Burned or Bitten by Bugs; Dodge Foodborne Illnesses by Following Safety Tips; Leave Fireworks to the Experts so You Don't Spend the Holiday in the ER

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is urging Illinoisans to celebrate July 4th and the start of Summer 2025 safely by following proven safety guidance so as not to spoil the fun. Follow food handling safety tips to protect friends and family from foodborne illnesses. Avoid sunburn and heat stroke by using sunscreen and proper summer attire. Protect yourself from disease carrying pests like mosquitos and ticks. And leave the fireworks to professionals.

This summer, IDPH is joining the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) in pointing to a 44% spike in fireworks-related injuries reported to Illinois hospitals in July of 2023 compared to 2024. In 2023, 108 fireworks injuries were logged at 34 hospitals; last year, 156 injuries, including one fatality, were recorded by 45 hospitals. As part of an effort to gather more comprehensive data, the OSFM is this year asking all medical providers to report fireworks injuries by completing [this online form](#).

“Independence Day is a one of my favorite holidays,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “As we celebrate America’s birthday with family, friends, food and fireworks, I encourage my fellow Illinoisans to do a little advance planning to make the 4th of July weekend as healthy and as safe as possible. Avoid foodborne illnesses at cookouts and picnics by keeping cold foods cold and cooking hot foods to the proper temperature. Steer clear of insect-borne illnesses and ‘fight the bite’ by reducing exposure and repelling unwanted bugs. Dodge sunburn and heat-related illnesses by applying sunscreen, staying hydrated, wearing lightweight, light-colored clothing. And keep the handling of fireworks to the professionals.”

Director Vohra noted that when it comes to attending fireworks displays, the smoke from such events can adversely affect the health of people with heart or lung disease. People with these conditions can still enjoy fireworks by taking protective steps, such as wearing a high-quality mask and viewing from a distance.

Following are additional health tips from IDPH on how to have a happy and safe July 4th and Summer Season on food safety; water safety; preventing sun burn and heat stroke; and tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses.

Food Safety

It can be difficult to keep food cold during warm weather, especially while picnicking or traveling. Keep meat, poultry, and seafood refrigerated until ready to grill. When transporting food, keep them at 40°F or below in an insulated cooler. One tip to help keep your cooler below 40°F is to pack beverages in one

cooler and food in another. The cooler with the beverages will likely be opened more frequently, causing the temperature inside the cooler to fluctuate. Also keep coolers in the shade and out of the direct sun.

To guard against cross-contamination, food should be kept separate. Raw meat, poultry, and seafood should be stored and prepared separately from fruits, vegetables, cheeses, salads and cooked foods.

Before grilling, thaw food safely in the refrigerator, in cold running water, or in the microwave. Always marinate food in the refrigerator, no matter what kind of marinade you're using. Never thaw or marinate meat, poultry, or seafood on the counter. Harmful germs can multiply quickly at room temperature.

Wash your hands with soap and water before eating as well as before, during, and after preparing foods. Wash work surfaces, utensils, and the grill before and after cooking.

Before you start grilling, use a moist cloth or paper towel to clean the grill surface. If you use a wire bristle brush, inspect the grill's surface before cooking. Wire bristles from the grill cleaning brush may dislodge and stick into food on the grill.

When grilling, make sure food is cooked to a safe temperature by using a food thermometer. Follow these temperature guidelines to ensure grilled food is safe for consumption:

- 145°F – Whole cuts of beef, veal, lamb, and pork, including fresh ham (allow meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating)
- 145°F – Fish with fins
- 160°F – Ground meats, such as beef and pork
- 165°F – All poultry, including ground chicken and turkey, leftovers, and casseroles

Throw out marinades and sauces that have touched raw meat juices, which can spread germs to cooked foods. Use clean utensils and a clean plate when you take cooked food off the grill.

After the meal, divide leftovers into small portions, cover, and place in clean, shallow containers. Make sure all leftovers are kept in the freezer or fridge or on ice within two hours after cooking, or one hour if outdoor or indoor temperatures are above 90°F.

And know the symptoms of most types of food poisoning, which include diarrhea, severe cramps, fever, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and bloody diarrhea. Symptoms can begin from 30 minutes to three or more days after eating contaminated food. If symptoms are severe or last longer than two days, contact a doctor or health care provider.

More food safety tips and information about foodborne illnesses and symptoms can be found on the [CDC Food Safety website](https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/).

Water and Swimming Safety

Whether at the beach, on the lake or in a swimming pool, keep the following safety precautions at top of mind:

- Supervise young children around water.
- Always use life jackets and secure personal flotation devices.
- Avoid alcohol while supervising children and before or during swimming, boating, or waterskiing
- Shower before entering a swimming pool and do not swim when ill with diarrhea.

- Be aware of the local weather conditions and forecasts; especially watch for thunderstorms with lightning.
- Pay attention to lifeguards and posted instructions.

Sun and Heat

When the temperature is elevated, guard against sunburn and heat illness:

- Never leave anyone, including pets, alone in a closed, parked vehicle.
- On hot days, go to [CDC's Heat and Health tracker](#) for instructions on what to do in your area, such as appropriate hydration, amount of outdoor exposure, especially if you are at [risk for heat injury](#).
 - If you are at risk (people over 65 years, children, pregnant people, those with chronic conditions, those without air conditioning, athletes and outdoor workers) should come up with a [Heat Action Plan](#) with their medical provider and be familiar with how to :
 - [Stay cool](#)
 - [Stay hydrated](#)
 - [Know the Symptoms](#)
 - [Check Air Quality](#)
 - Have a Medication Plan
- Be aware of heat stroke symptoms - hot, dry skin, hallucinations, chills, throbbing headache, high body temperature, confusion/dizziness and slurred speech.
 - If present, be sure to call 911; quickly cool the person in a cool bath or wrap wet sheets around them; if the victim refuses water, is vomiting or shows a decreased level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink.
- Know where cooling centers in IL are located through [Keep Cool Illinois](#).

Ticks and Mosquitoes

Whether camping, hiking or in the backyard, guard against insect-borne illnesses. Mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus and ticks can transmit Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Ehrlichiosis and other serious infections.

- **WEAR INSECT REPELLENT.** Apply insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR 3535, according to label instructions.
- Avoid being outside during prime mosquito-biting hours, dusk to dawn.
- Avoid tick-infested areas, such as the woods and high grasses.
- Check people and pets for ticks every 2 to 3 hours.

- Remove ticks attached to the body promptly to help prevent diseases. Use tweezers to remove the tick and call a health care provider if a rash, fever or body aches develop during the 1 to 3 weeks following a bite.
- Ask a veterinarian about preventing tickborne diseases in pets as they can carry ticks into the home.
- For more information, review our [Vector Disease webpage](#) as well as our [Illinois Tickborne Disease Dashboard](#).

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