

# Tips for safer picnics

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Credit: Helena Lopes from Pexels

Picnics can be a fun way to enjoy the summer season. But improper handling of the food can mean trouble in the form of food-borne germs. Before you fill your cooler, review these tips for safer picnics.

## **Picnic tip No. 1: When you open the cooler, keep an eye on the clock**

"The general rule is to have food out only two hours," says Kate Zeratsky, a Mayo Clinic registered dietitian nutritionist. "However, on a hot day—90 [degrees Fahrenheit] and above—you want to limit the time that food is out in that [hot weather](#) to one hour."

She adds, "You might even consider a bowl of ice. And, then, sit your food container in that ice. That can help maintain a cool temperature."

## **Picnic tip No. 2: Pay special attention to proteins**

"Bacteria like protein," says Zeratsky.

So keep meat cold until it hits the grill. Then, use a [meat](#) thermometer to make sure it's cooked to a safe temperature. At least 160 degrees [degrees Fahrenheit] for ground meats and 165 [degrees Fahrenheit] for poultry.

## **Picnic tip No. 3: Shield your sweets, including the ones from Mother Nature**

"Fruit, with its [natural sugars](#), is going to attract some bugs," says Zeratsky. "So you might want to keep it covered."

## **And picnic tip No. 4: Better to be safe than sorry**

"When in doubt, throw it out. You don't want anyone to get sick."

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