

Environment Department shares food safety tips for Memorial Day weekend

Written by gallupsun
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SANTA FE — Sharing food with friends and family is a highlight for many New Mexicans over Memorial Day weekend. To keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy, the New Mexico Environment Department reminds you to follow these simple food safety tips:

- Make sure that the location of the gathering has enough oven, stovetop, refrigerator, freezer, and workspace needed to keep foods at a safe temperature
- Ensure that there is a source of clean water for food preparation and cleaning
- Separate raw meats from other foods
- Keep hot foods at an internal temperature of 140°F or warmer
- Keep cold foods at 40°F or colder
- Discard any perishables left out at room temperature for more than two hours
- Wash hands, surfaces, and serving utensils often
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator

Foods that are not properly prepared or stored can make you sick. Most foodborne illnesses are caused by germs like bacteria, viruses or parasites. The most common symptoms of foodborne illness are diarrhea and/or vomiting. Other symptoms might include cramping, nausea, fever, headache, tiredness and sometimes blood or pus in the stool.

While many people with foodborne illness believe they got it from the last meal they ate, this is not always the case. Symptoms of foodborne illness can begin as early as 30 minutes after consuming contaminated food, beverages or water, but usually start one or more days after the exposure. Foodborne illnesses generally last a few days but can be more severe in people who have medical problems or weakened immune systems.

One way to stay safe over the holiday is to eat at local restaurants in New Mexico. Restaurants and commercial kitchens are required by law to follow safe food handling and preparation procedures, and they are inspected regularly to ensure compliance with regulations.

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NMED's Food Safety Program protects public health by permitting, inspecting and providing technical assistance to food establishments in New Mexico to prevent foodborne illness. The program also permits events where food will be served, like county and state fairs. As of the most recent NMED Quarterly Performance Report, only 4.5% of restaurants and food manufacturers were found to have some type of violation during an annual inspection. NMED does not have jurisdiction in Bernalillo County and Albuquerque, as they have their own food safety programs.

If you believe you may have a foodborne illness, contact your healthcare provider and the New Mexico Department of Health at 505-827-0006. Report a possible concern or violation of a license, permit, or rule to NMED online or at 866-428-6535.

