**June is National Safety Month (our focus is Food Safety)**

***Tip of the Month from Your Health & Wellness Committee***

Summer is just around the corner, and that means more picnics and barbeques with friends. But you want to avoid uninvited guests — bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Here are some tips from the USFDA to help you have a SAFE party:

**Pack and Transport Food Safely**

**Keep your food safe: from the refrigerator/freezer all the way to the picnic table.**

* **Keep cold food cold.** Place cold food in a cooler with ice or frozen packs. Store cold food at **40°F or below** to prevent bacterial growth. Meat, poultry, and seafood may be packed while still frozen so they stay colder longer.
* **Organize cooler contents.** Consider packing beverages in one cooler and perishable foods in another. As picnickers open and reopen the *beverage* cooler for drinks, the *perishable foods* won’t be exposed to warm outdoor air temperatures.
* **Don’t cross-contaminate.** Be sure to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood securely wrapped. This keeps their juices from contaminating other foods, especially those that will be eaten raw.
* **Clean your produce.** Rinse **fresh fruits and vegetables** before packing them in the cooler - including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Dry fruits and vegetables before packing.

**Follow Safe Grilling Tips**

**Grilling and picnicking often go hand-in-hand. Here are important guidelines that should be followed:**

* **Marinate safely.** Marinate foods in the refrigerator - *never* on the kitchen counter or outdoors. Want use some of the marinade as a sauce on cooked food? R*eserve a portion separately* before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. **Don’t reuse marinade.**
* **Cook immediately after "partial cooking."** If you partially cook food to reduce grilling time, do so *immediately before* the food goes on the hot grill.
* **Cook food thoroughly.**  Always use a food thermometer to be sure your food is cooked thoroughly.
* **Keep "ready" food hot.** Grilled food can be kept hot by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals. This keeps it hot but prevents overcooking.
* **Don't reuse platters or utensils.** Using the same platter or utensils that previously held raw meat allows bacteria from the raw food’s juices to spread to the cooked food. Have a clean platter and utensils ready to serve your food.
* **Check for foreign objects in food.** If you clean your grill using a bristle brush, be sure no detached bristles have made their way into grilled food.