Avoiding Food Poisoning this Summer

Backyard barbecues, coolers packed for picnics, al fresco dining and hot summer days are all the ingredients for a bad case of food poisoning if you're not careful.

Cases of food borne illness peak during the summer months, according to the USDA. But taking a few precautions can help you avoid food poisoning, say experts. Learn more about summertime risks and get tips to stay safe this summer—and all year long.

Summer = *Salmonella* risk

One of the biggest food safety risks during summer is *Salmonella* infection, *Salmonella* is a bacteria that may be found in raw and undercooked meats, poultry and eggs. It may also contaminate other foods, such as fruits and vegetables. It is the second most common source of food poisoning and the leading cause of hospitalization due to food borne illness, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

*Salmonella* illness is more common in summer because the bacteria thrive in warm temperatures. People who are infected by *Salmonella* may develop diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps. Most recover without treatment within a week; but some, become so sick they require hospitalization.

To reduce your risk, here are some of the important tips:

- Make sure foods are cooked thoroughly.
- Don't let food sit out for more than two hours; make it one hour if the temperature is 90°F or higher.
- Keep perishable items in a cooler or insulated bag.

And if your food seems undercooked or not right, don't eat it. If the hot food's not hot enough, cold food's not cold enough, if you don't feel good with it, don't eat it!

**Cantaloupe Salsa**

**Ingredients:** 2 cups diced cantaloupe, ¼ cup diced sweet onion (Vidalia or red), 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil, 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, 1 red or green chile minced, 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice ¼ teaspoon salt.

**Directions:** Mix all together and serve

**Nutritional Info:** Calories 60, from fat 0, Cholesterol 0, Sodium 180mg, Potassium 450mg, Total Carbohydrate15g, Protein 2g