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## Food Safe Families Enjoy More Summer Fun

A new national campaign developed by the Ad Council and several federal agencies has some great advice for Montana families who are headed outdoors this summer. *Food Safe Families* aims to raise awareness about the risks of foodborne illness and to help consumers, especially parents, to take specific actions to reduce the risks to themselves and their children.

"*Food Safe Families* is a perfect fit for ongoing food safety work at MSU Extension," says Dr. Lynn Paul, RD (registered dietitian), Food and Nutrition Specialist at Montana State University in Bozeman. "In the US, approximately 1 in 6 Americans suffer a food-related illness, sometimes called food poisoning, every year. Here in Montana, Extension promotes many programs to reduce foodborne illness, including **ServSafe** for restaurant and school workers, **Safe Aid** for food banks and pantries, and **Celebrating Food Safety at Pow Wows**. Through these programs, MSU Extension is committed to reducing food-related illness in our state."

Food-related illnesses tend to increase during the summer months for several reasons. Family vacations and hot weather are both contributing factors. More families eat outdoors - everywhere from backyard picnics and national park campgrounds to hiking trails and motorboats. Special effort is also necessary to keep cold foods cold in summer weather. Unfortunately, many Americans do not take enough personal responsibility for keeping food safe to eat after they buy it at a supermarket or grocery store.

"Every one of us can take simple steps to be food safe every day," explains Paul. "Preventing foodborne illness is a farm-to-table process. It begins where food is produced and continues through everywhere it is processed and marketed. Consumers also play a critical role in food safety by properly handling, preparing, and storing food everywhere they eat."

Here are four basic steps that *Food Safe Families* can follow anytime, anywhere they shop, cook, or eat:

- **CLEAN:** It's always important to clean kitchen surfaces, dishes, and utensils while preparing food. One of the most basic, easiest ways to prevent illness is to wash hands thoroughly before and after eating.
- **SEPARATE:** Cross contamination can occur from bacteria on raw foods to ready-to-eat items. Separate raw meat, poultry, and fish from other foods - in grocery bags, the refrigerator, and camping coolers.
- **COOK:** A small digital thermometer is essential for safely cooking inside and outdoors, especially when grilling meat and poultry. A \$10 to \$15 investment in a kitchen thermometer can prevent expensive illnesses.
- **CHILL:** Special attention is necessary to keep foods cold in summer's heat. All perishable items must be kept in a fridge or cooler until time to cook or eat. Cooked foods should be kept out no longer than 2 hours.

"Montanans can find all the most current food safety information online," notes Dr. Paul. "[FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov) and our MSU Extension site ([www.msuextension.org/nutrition/](http://www.msuextension.org/nutrition/)) have tips, guidelines, and even videos."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at [www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm)