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For Immediate Release

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## Grill It Safely

While warm weather is often an invitation to move meals outdoors, cooking out—or grilling—is not without risks. Common food safety mistakes, such as underestimating cooking times or not washing hands, increase the risk for foodborne illness. Consider the following food safety tips as you grill this summer:

**\*Wash hands.** Wash your hands before and after handling raw or cooked foods as well as before and after eating. Soap and water is the preferred method, but the use of hand sanitizers or disposable towelettes is acceptable if water is not available. Remember to make sure that food surfaces, cooking utensils, and serving dishes are clean as well.

**\*Keep meat cold until ready to grill.** Do not leave out at room temperature.

**\*Thaw safely!** Completely thaw meat and poultry in the refrigerator or just prior to cooking in a microwave. Frozen foods do not grill evenly and may be unsafe. Never thaw on the counter—bacteria will begin to grow. It takes about 24 hours to thaw 5 pounds of meat in the refrigerator.

**\*Marinate meat and poultry in the refrigerator.** Sauces can be brushed on these foods while cooking, but never use the same sauce that has touched the raw product.

**\*Prevent cross-contamination.** Do not use the same platter or utensils to handle raw and cooked products. Use a clean or separate plate for raw meats and cooked meats.

**\*Cook meat to proper temperatures.** The USDA recommends cooking whole cuts of meat—pork, steaks, roasts, and chops—to 145 degrees as measured by a food thermometer placed in the thickest part of the meat. After cooking to its recommended temperature, the meat should be allowed to rest for three minutes before carving or consuming. Ground meats, including ground beef, veal, lamb, and pork, should be cooked to 160 degrees and do not require a rest time. The safe cooking temperature for all poultry products, including ground chicken and turkey, is 165 degrees.

**\*Keep hot foods hot.** Once food is taken from the grill, keep the meat hot until serving in a warming tray or slow cooker.

**\*Wait until grilled foods are ready**—or almost ready to eat—before removing perishable salads and condiments from the refrigerator or cooler. If foods are allowed to sit out on a picnic table unnecessarily, the risk of contamination, either from the food itself or microorganisms that may be in the environment, increases.

**\*Place leftovers in the refrigerator.** Discard any food left out for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is about 90 degrees. **When in doubt, throw it out!**

As you enjoy outdoor cooking, remember to keep food safety a top priority. More information on food safety, health and cooking tips, such as learning more about using a meat thermometer is available at Flint Hills Extension District office in Cottonwood Falls at (620) 273-6491 or the office in Council Grove at (620) 767-5136.