

Living Well

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES NEWSLETTER FOR NORTHEAST COLORADO



July-August, 2023

Food Safety for Backyard BBQ Cookouts



Many people enjoy outdoor grilling in the summer months. Warm temperatures and long days are the perfect combination for outdoor BBQ cookouts. Keeping guests and ourselves safe with proper food safety during those cookouts is important.

Here are tips to avoid food poisoning caused by germs growing quickly in the heat.

- Meat must be cooked to the proper temperature. Use a food thermometer to make sure it is hot enough to kill harmful germs.
- Foods can become unsafe if they stay too long at room temperatures good for pathogen growth. Make sure there is not time-temperature abuse by icing down salads and condiments throughout your cookout. Also be sure to keep foods chilled prior to cooking in a cooler or at 40 degrees or below.
- Wash, wash, wash! Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before handling food. Wash again after touching raw meat as well as after leaving your cooking station for any reason.
- Wipe surfaces often and keep insects away.

Preventing cross contamination is another important part of summer cooking. It is important to keep food covered so outside contaminants do not get into the food.

Preparing food away from raw meat will also help prevent cross contamination. It is also crucial to wash the serving utensil and tray after putting raw meat on the grill before using it again to turn the product or serve from. Using ice for drinks from ice used to keep food or beverages cold is not a safe option. These are examples of simple steps we can take to prevent getting sick from cross contamination.

It is common to see food sitting outside for extended periods of time during an outdoor family barbecue. Instead, remaining food should be placed in a refrigerator or cooler with ice within two hours of cooking and one hour if it is above 90 degrees outside. This is why it is important to ice down salads during those scorching summer days while serving. It is also important to cool down warm foods before bacteria growth can begin after everyone is done eating.

Grilling and picnicking outside with family and friends can be an enjoyable summer event, or it can be a miserable memory if food safety precautions are not taken. By practicing good personal hygiene, monitoring time temperature control, and preventing cross contamination, we can help prevent foodborne illnesses from occurring during our summer backyard cookouts.

Download this poster for a quick and easy reminder on grilling safely. How to Grill Safely- <https://col.st/TGmkk>

Joy Akey
Yuma County
joy.akey@colostate.edu
(970) 332-4151

Katie Seelhoff
Morgan County
katie.seelhoff@colostate.edu
(970) 542-3540

Anne Mason
Washington County
anne.mason@colostate.edu
(970) 345-2287

Stephanie Starkebaum
Phillips County
Stephanie.Starkebaum@colostate.edu
(970) 854-3616

Jaci Wagner
Logan County
jaci.wagner@colostate.edu
(970) 522-3200

McKayla Stephen
Kit Carson County
mckayla.stephen@colostate.edu
(719) 346-5571

Extension Online
<https://goldenplains.extension.colostate.edu/>

<https://logan.extension.colostate.edu/>

https://morgan.extension.colostate.edu

Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Colorado State University Extension is implied.



GOLDEN PLAINS AREA
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma Counties cooperating.

Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Dig into the benefits of gardening



Growing your own food in a garden is not a new idea. It was a critical way for ancient people to have access to reliable, nutritious foods, but the necessity of vegetable gardens has varied through time. Gardening has gained popularity recently, even with easy and inexpensive access to food at grocery stores. A study found that interest in gardening increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. People spent more time at home and turned to their gardens for a connection to nature, stress relief and food provisions. Watching and managing the growth and development of vegetable and flower gardens can be both challenging and gratifying.

Here are a few of the many benefits of digging in the dirt:

Increased exercise

A busy day in the garden can be a good form of exercise. While tending a garden, you perform functional movement that mimics whole body exercise. You perform squats and lunges while weeding. Carrying bags of mulch and other supplies works large muscle groups. Digging, raking, and using a push mower can be physically intense activities. You may burn as many calories as a workout in the gym. If you are not used to these types of activities, it is likely you will feel a bit sore after a busy day gardening. Gardening also can improve your balance, strength, and flexibility. Gardening activities can be modified if movement is a challenge. There are different ways to participate if you think outside of the box. Use a small stool or raised garden beds if you suffer from back pain. A shovel or rake can be used to support your knees when squatting. Smaller pots and bags of soil or mulch are lighter and easier to move than large ones.

Improved diet

Growing and eating your own fruits and vegetables can have a positive impact on your diet. Gardeners are more likely to include vegetables as part of healthy, well-balanced diets. Corn, potatoes, and salsa made from ingredients grown in your garden can be enjoyed year-round. Different vegetables have a variety of unique health benefits. Peppers contain capsaicin, which has anti-inflammatory properties and can reduce heart disease. Tomatoes are high in vitamin C and potassium. They also contain lycopene, an antioxidant that may reduce prostate cancer risk. Sweet potatoes are high in beta carotene, an antioxidant that may help slow the aging process and reduce the risk of some cancers. Spinach may boost your immune system and broccoli protects your body's cells from damage.

Time in nature

Going outdoors is good for your physical and mental health. People tend to breathe deeper when outside helping to clear out the lungs, improve digestion, improve immune response, and increase oxygen levels in the blood. Spending time outdoors leads to reduced heart rate and muscle tension. Sunlight lowers blood pressure and increases vitamin D levels.

Reduced stress levels

All forms of exercise can reduce stress including gardening. It has been shown to lighten mood and lower levels of stress and anxiety. It is very gratifying to plant, tend, harvest, and share your own food. Routines provide structure to your day and are linked to improved mental health. Gardening routines, like watering and weeding, can create a soothing rhythm to ease stress. Even pulling weeds can be therapeutic and calming, providing the opportunity to slow down and plan.

Social connection

Gardening brings people together and strengthens social connections. The gardening community is rich with people willing to share their expertise, time and occasionally plants with new gardeners. Master gardeners are local volunteers dedicated to educating and empowering fellow gardeners. Community garden plots bring together people with diverse backgrounds to work on a common goal. Many gardening friendships begin by celebrating a success or bemoaning a gardening misstep. Social connections are important because they help lower stress, improve resilience, and provide support during difficult times in life. A strong sense of belonging lowers your risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide. For example, friends and neighbors may plan their vegetable gardens together, discuss what worked well or needs to be improved from the previous year, share extra produce with each other, and host a big salsa making party in the fall to enjoy the harvest together. These activities improve the joy of the garden and strengthen connections.

For planting information, call your local extension office. For food preservation information, visit [PreserveSmart.com](https://www.preserveandshare.com/).

Source: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/dig-into-the-benefits-of-gardening>

Taking Breaks in Your Workday

There are numerous benefits of taking breaks throughout the workday, but we often neglect to take them. With increased workloads, deadlines to meet, and your inbox filling up, we continue to plug along and push through. It seems impossible to step away and hit the pause button.

Taking breaks is a learned behavior that requires repetition to build this important habit. Breaks are not created equally; some benefit your wellbeing while others increase fatigue. Many suggest taking a short 3 to 5 minute break every 30 to 60 minutes. Longer breaks of 10 to 15 minutes are beneficial if you have been working continuously for a few hours. Here are some tips to build healthy breaks during your workday.



- Set a timer or reminder on your smartwatch or computer to take a quick break every hour to get up and get moving... do not ignore them!
- Look for natural pauses in your day and take a break.
- Stick to a schedule but be flexible and adjust your break before or after a meeting or long phone call. Do not skip the break all together.

Examples of short healthy breaks within the workday.

- Physical Activity (walking, stretching, etc.)
- Short task, like cleaning or organizing
- Take a short or power nap (10 to 20 minutes)
- Give your eyes a break (take a break for 20 seconds... and look at something 20 feet away... every 20 minutes)
- Breathing, meditating, mindfulness activity
- Switch from one task to another
- Change your scenery (walk away from your desk, go outside)
- Take a lunch break (eat at another location away from your desk)
- Hydrate yourself and increase your bathroom visits to force yourself to get up and move
- Listen to music (most songs last 3 to 5 minutes)
- Let your mind wonder
- Use a standing workstation or under the desk workout equipment



Reducing your sedentary time will improve your physical health and reduce your risk of cardiovascular and metabolic problems. In addition, breaks help boost your mental health, increase your productivity, reduce stress, and promote enjoyment in your workplace. So, what are you waiting for? Take a break!

Resources:

West Virginia Extension - <https://extension.wvu.edu/food-health/emotional-wellness/taking-breaks>

Michigan State University - <https://workplace.msu.edu/breaks-during-the-workday/>

National Men's Health Month



June was National Men's Health Month, a designated time to help raise awareness about preventable health conditions and encourage early detection and treatment of diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show men in the U.S. die five years earlier than women on average. They also are more likely to have heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Even if June passed you by, you can still help the men in your life take better care of themselves by encouraging and supporting their efforts to eat healthier, become more active, protect their mental health and work towards preventing disease. Here are six ways to help prioritize physical and mental health.

1. Visit the doctor.

There is always a great reason to start eating healthier. Limiting the amount of packaged and processed foods typically high in sugar, salt, unhealthy fats, artificial additives, and calories and cutting back on empty calorie beverages and alcoholic drinks are two great ways to start. For example, instead of a bowl of ice cream for dessert, try a bowl of non-fat Greek yogurt topped with fresh fruit. Consistently eating a wide variety of fruits and veggies, whole grains, fiber-rich foods, and lean proteins leads to better overall health and reduced risk of health-related diseases.

2. Watch what you eat.

There is always a great reason to start eating healthier. Limiting the amount of packaged and processed foods typically high in sugar, salt, unhealthy fats, artificial additives, and calories and cutting back on empty calorie beverages and alcoholic drinks are two great ways to start. For example, instead of a bowl of ice cream for dessert, try a bowl of non-fat Greek yogurt topped with fresh fruit. Consistently eating a wide variety of fruits and veggies, whole grains, fiber-rich foods, and lean proteins leads to better overall health and reduced risk of health-related diseases.

3. Get moving.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among American men. One of the best ways to prevent heart disease and improve overall physical and mental health is regular exercise. Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic activity, such as walking, jogging, swimming, biking, or anything that raises heart rate, five days per week. It is also important to include muscle strengthening activities such as weightlifting or yoga at least twice a week to help build and maintain strength and flexibility.

4. Break unhealthy habits.

Most of us have at least one habit we would like to break. This is especially important when looking at habits that are extremely risky and negatively affect health. Smoking, excessive drinking and drug use are prime examples. Smoking and secondhand smoke exposure can cause chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, heart disease and other health conditions and can increase risk for cancer. Risks and health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption (up to two drinks a day for men) is still relatively unknown, but it is clear excessive drinking can lead to liver disease, cirrhosis, and dependence. Recreational drug use can lead to serious health consequences no matter the quantity or frequency. Habits are hard to break, and many people need help in quitting smoking, drinking or drugs. Doctors and other health care providers can assist with developing a plan to quit and provide resources and recommendations for medication, therapy, or other treatments.

5. Protect skin.

One in five Americans will get skin cancer, and men over the age of 50 are at an even higher risk. Skin cancer is one of the easiest cancers to prevent. Protection from the sun's harmful rays can be achieved by

- avoiding the sun during peak hours (from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM)
- wearing a hat and sunglasses
- applying SPF 30 or greater sunscreen to all exposed skin.

6. Minding mental health.

Effectively managing stress is one keyway to a happy and healthy life. Many lifestyle behaviors are not only good for the body but also good for the mind – for example participating in outdoor activities, practicing deep breathing and meditation, getting a massage, or taking a nap. Self-care and stress management look different for everyone, but the idea is to do something each day that brings happiness. Seek help if you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis.



Getting Kids Ready to go Back to School

Whether your summer was packed with activities, or you had lots of downtime, kids can have a challenging time getting back into a routine when school starts again. The good news is there are some simple things you can do as a family to help make this transition a little smoother.

Get Ready – Focus on the positive aspects of school. Your child will get to see their friends again, make some new friends, get cool school supplies, and get involved in school activities like sports and clubs. If your child is nervous about the start of the new school year, talk to them about why they are feeling nervous. They may be nervous about starting at a new school or not knowing where their classes will be. If possible, you can visit the school before the new year starts so they can become familiar with it. Write down essential information they need to know like a locker combination, their class times, when lunch will start, and teacher's and bus driver's names.

Set up Routines – Before the start of the school year, start setting up a routine like the one they may have during school. Make sure children are going to bed by a certain time, getting enough sleep, and getting a healthy breakfast in the morning. Use a wall calendar or personal planner so kids can see their schedule before the school year starts. If your child is old enough, this can be a tool to discuss bedtimes and what time they will need to wake up in the morning so they can be a part of setting up their routine.

Discuss What to Wear, Bring, and Eat – It can be helpful to go through their school schedule and discuss the things they will need to bring with them every day. Read the school dress code so your child feels more comfortable deciding what to wear each day. If they are nervous about this, you can set clothes out each night with them so they do not have to stress about it in the mornings. Talk to your child about whether they will need to bring a change of clothes for a gym class or after school sports. Discuss whether they will be bringing their own lunch from home or if they will be getting lunch at school.

Medical Issues – As a parent, it is important to make sure you have all their health forms filled out, especially if they have any medical conditions such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, etc. If your child needs to bring something like an inhaler or insulin with them to school, discuss safe practices with these items and any school policies about how to handle them. If there are medical needs, be sure to discuss them with the school nurse and their teachers before the school year starts.

Transportation and Safety – Make sure your children know what time school starts and how they will get there. If your children are riding the bus, make sure they know the drop off and pick up locations, school bus number, and what time the bus will be dropping off and picking up. If they are walking or riding a bike to school, discuss traffic safety with them and make sure they know the importance of using the crosswalk.

Managing Homework – It can be important to discuss your homework expectations with your child prior to the start of school. For example, if you have the expectation they complete all their homework before spending time with friends, make sure they know before the school year starts. Have a quiet place that is free of distractions for them to complete their homework. Once the school year has started, review their homework every night to make sure they understand everything.

Make it Fun! – When talking about school with your children, keep the conversation positive. If they see you value school, they are more likely to value it themselves. Talking to them about school also shows that you are interested in what is going on in their life. This can boost their mental health, happiness and wellbeing. Show them you are excited for the things they are doing to make school fun for your kids.

Article adapted from: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/back-school.html>

Smoothies

Smoothies are the perfect summertime treat. They will cool you down and are a portable, quick, oven-free option. They make it easy to sneak in different fruits and vegetables you may otherwise not eat. While smoothies come in various forms with an endless range of ingredients, it is essential to remember the nutritional value of a smoothie is determined by what ingredients you use.

According to the [USDA's MyPlate](#), a tool for healthy eating, most adults should eat two and a half cups of vegetables and two cups of fruits daily to lower their risk for certain diseases and provide optimal health and dietary needs. One way to achieve this goal is to incorporate smoothies into your daily routine. The USDA's MyPlate nutrition guideline depicts the five major food groups (dairy, fruit, vegetables, grains, and protein) to build a balanced smoothie meal. With some planning and experimentation, you can create a nutrient-packed smoothie that is tasty and healthy.



Follow the steps and tips below to make a nutritious smoothie:

Step One: Pick your Base:

- Choose $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of liquid (water, low-fat milk, or plant-based beverage) depending on your desired consistency.
- When preparing, add the liquid base to sit at the bottom of the blender, making the ingredients easier to blend.
- **Dairy** foods like milk or yogurt will give your smoothie a thicker, smoother texture.
 - Dairy foods are rich in calcium, vitamin D, and phosphorus to build strong bones.
 - Aim for reduced-fat dairy that is low in fat and sugar.
 - Give Greek yogurt a try! It has more protein and less sugar than regular yogurt.
- **Non-Dairy** liquids such as water or plant-based liquids such as almond, soy, rice, or coconut milk are great options if you are avoiding lactose or cannot tolerate cow's milk.
 - Check the nutritional label to compare plant-based liquids' calories, protein, and vitamin/mineral profiles.
 - Only use 100% juice in small amounts for flavoring or combine produce with other liquid(s) to decrease sugar content.
 - Water is a calorie-free option that can be added to reduce the thickness, whereas ice can thicken up your smoothie.

Step Two: Choose your Produce:

- Choose 2 to 3 cups of fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables.
 - **Vegetables:** spinach, chard, kale, green peppers, avocado, carrot, pumpkin, squash, sweet potato, peas.
 - **Fruit:** Strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberry, cranberry, banana, pineapple, peach, pear, plum, cherry, melon, apple, kiwi, mango, papaya, orange, lemon, and lime.
- If you use frozen fruits or vegetables, the liquid will need to increase depending on how dense and/or frozen produce is.
- If using canned fruits, select those canned in their own juices instead of those canned in syrup to avoid adding unnecessary sugar.
- Sweet fruits blend well with many vegetables to create a tasty, nutritious smoothie.
- Blending will be more effortless if you chop larger produce into smaller pieces.
- Avocados and mashed red/orange vegetables such as pumpkin, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, and carrots will add thickness to smoothies.

Step Three: Boost the Nutrition:

- Add protein-rich ingredients like beans, nuts, seeds, or nut butter to increase the protein and fiber content.
- Beans blend nicely without adding flavor. Beans also boost your smoothie's fiber and protein content.

- Nut butter or nuts such as walnuts or almonds increase protein, flavor, and healthy fat in your smoothie to help keep you full for longer. Keep it to 1-2 tbsp.



- Whole grains like oatmeal, flax seed, and quinoa will help boost the fiber content, help your body digest your food, and keep you feeling fuller longer.
- Use about ¼ cup of oats per smoothie. The fiber in oats creates a gel in liquids, so the longer your smoothie sits after you blend in oats, the thicker it will get.
- Add flax or chia seeds to provide heart-healthy Omega 3s to your diet.
- Add cocoa powder, a pitted date or two, ½ tsp of vanilla extract, cinnamon, pumpkin spice, or honey to sweeten your smoothie.

Smoothies can be a convenient and nutritious option for any meal or snack. Mixing and matching these components for multiple combinations is easy, but finding your perfect blend may take trial and error. Start with some recipes from our Live Smart Colorado blog, then experiment! There is no limit to what you can create, as the possibilities are endless!

Recipes: <https://livesmartcolorado.colostate.edu/try-adding-this-secret-ingredient-to-your-smoothies/>

Adapted from: <https://extension.psu.edu/smoothies-a-great-blend-of-flavor-convenience-and-nutrition>

Resources: <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan/results/2000-calories-ages-14-plus>

August Financial To-Do List



Whether you are trying to recuperate your financial wellbeing after summer or getting ready for the big school supply expenses, August can be a wonderful time to focus on your finances. Below are some things to keep in mind as you organize your finances this month.

Save on school supplies: (Consider not purchasing everything on your child’s school supply list. Chances are they will not need everything on the first day of school. Reach out to the teachers to see what they will need in the first month or so, then get the rest of your child’s

supplies in September when prices may be reduced. Keep an eye out for any back-to-school sales coming up. Many retailers will have coupons or discount days leading up to the start of school.

Preparing for the Holidays: While it seems like we have plenty of time to prepare for the holidays, it is never too early to start planning. Think about how much money you plan to spend and create a plan to start saving. This will prevent financial stress during the holidays and allow you to enjoy them more.

Reset your Budget: With the start of new activities for kids, August may be the time to review your budget. You may need to start planning for new expenses or may not be spending as much on other items or activities. In addition, look at your families' spending habits from this summer. Did you stay on track? Are there areas of your budget that may need to change? Discuss all these topics with your family and determine if and how you may need to adjust your budget.

Perform a Mid-Year Credit Report Checkup: If you have not done so already, August would be a suitable time to pull your credit report. When checking your credit report, there are a few things you should look out for. The first is for any accounts that are not yours. Accounts could be for a family member who lives at your same address or even a stranger with a similar name. You should also check for any incorrect information such as late payment on bills that were paid on time or multiple collection agency notations for a single debt. One more thing to look out for is any negative information, like late payments, remaining after the seven-year “drop-off” period.

If you would like more information on credit reports, check out Colorado State University Extensions fact sheet:

<https://extension.colostate.edu/docs/pubs/consumer/09141.pdf>

Look for Ways to Save Money at Home: This can be done in a couple of different ways. First, there are many ways to bring your homeowners insurance down. Check with your insurance provider to see where you can save money. Things like installing hard-wired smoke detectors, installing a security system, changing deadbolts, or removing dying trees could save you lots of money on insurance. Another way to save money in your home is to make sure it is efficient. Check the caulking around your windows to make sure they are sealed properly. Unplugging appliances while they are not in use can help to prevent them from pulling electricity all day long.

Article adapted from: <https://www.consumerreports.org/personal-finance/your-august-financial-to-do-list/> and <http://howdoyoucu.togethercu.org/blog/2021/8/94/financial-checklist-for-august>

Upcoming County Fair Dates

- Phillips County Fair – July 25 th-30th at County Fairgrounds in Holyoke: Open Class entries Wednesday, July 27th 1:00-6:00 p.m.
- Kit Carson County Fair – July 26 th-31st at County Fairgrounds in Burlington:
- Sedgwick County Fair – July 24th - August 1st at County Fairgrounds in Julesburg: Quilt entries Saturday, July 2th 9:00-10:00 a.m., Open Class entries Monday, July 26th 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Floral entries Wed. July 28th 8:00-10:00 a.m., Garden entries Thursday, July 29th 8:00-9:30 am
- Eastern Colorado Roundup (Washington County) – July 25th-30th at County Fairgrounds in Akron: Open Class and Horticulture entries Tues. July 26th 1:00-6:00 p.m.
- Logan County Fair – July 28th – August 7th: Open Class entries must be pre-entered by July 22nd online at <http://bit.ly/LoganCountyFairEntry> For more info: <http://www.lcfair.org/>
- Morgan County Fair – July 28th – August 3rd at the Morgan County Fairgrounds in Brush: Entries for Open Class Home Economics are accepted Thursday, July 27th from 6:30-8:00 p.m. and again on Friday, July 28th from 8:00-11:00 a.m.
- Yuma County Fair – August 3rd – 8th at County Fairgrounds in Yuma: Open Class entries Wednesday, August 3rd 3:00-6:00 p.m. and Thursday, August 4th 7:30-9:00 a.m.

Upcoming Events!

- **Morgan County Fresh Conversations**
 - During this monthly program for older adults, we will discuss a different food item, various forms of exercise, and sample a new recipe at the Gene Doty Senior Center in Fort Morgan. We will be meeting on 11th from 2:00-3:00 p.m. and August 9th from 10:45-11:45 a.m. For more information or to register, contact Katie Seelhoff at (970) 542-3540 or Katie.seelhoff@colostate.edu.
- **Be sure to check our Facebook page listed below to stay up to date on all our upcoming events.**



CSU Extension – NE Colorado FCS: <https://www.facebook.com/CSUExtensionNortheastFCS>

CSU Extension – Phillips County: <https://www.facebook.com/PhillipsCountyExtension/>

CSU Extension – Logan County: https://www.facebook.com/csuextensionlogancounty/?_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARCS5-NbtiQryVnN5X513c5--hwVu-1ZfnhynwZsPotP7AZIVStJaoCEoaVYzZjBFhCH0tHJLHaJxQuQ

CSU Extension – Morgan County: <https://www.facebook.com/extensionmorgancounty/>